The Village

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Issue #236 July/August 2023

NEWS & FEATURES from Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Blackwell, Burcot Beoley, Cofton Hackett, Finstall, Hopwood, Bordesley, Rowney Green, Lickey, Lickey End, Marlbrook, The Oakalls & everywhere in between!

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TheVillage Issue 236 July/August 2023

inside

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Front cover: A foxglove frenzy, taken by Michael Corfield, of Rowney Green.

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Village 'Glasto' rocks new site

THE FANTASTIC GlastonBeoley Music Festival enjoyed a successful weekend at its new venue for 2023, the Redditch Rugby, Cricket and Hockey Club, writes *Keith Woolford*.

Revellers soaked up the sun while enjoying music from almost 40 performances as families and friends gathered over the two days.

■ **Left:** Organiser Debbie Joynes, astride her blinged-out mobility scooter, and her dedicated team welcome the festival-goers. More pictures in the next issue of *The Village*.

'HISTORIC PROTECTION'

A NEW residents group has been formed to fight proposals for a "huge, budget hotel" in a village conservation area.

The Alvechurch Residents Association says its sole focus currently is the application to turn the former Alvechurch Sports & Social Club into a 28-bedroom hotel.

It's chairman, James Brown, told *The Village*: "I'm in the construction Industry myself, so I'm not against development, but the size and scale of this building would be completely inappropriate in our historic village centre.

"We also don't believe there is a need for a 28-bedroom B&B. If the site were to be converted, it would be far more useful to the village if it were used for services such as a post office or larger medical centre."

The association says: "We are a group of Alvechurch residents who care deeply about where we live. We value the unique spirit, character and appearance of our historic village and are deeply opposed to the plans to build a huge, budget hotel in the middle of the conservation area.

"Because of this application we have formed the Alvechurch Residents Association so that we can tackle this inappropriate development in a coordinated way.

ALVECHURCH RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION
A VOICE FOR OUR COMMUNITY

The association's logo (above) and the former social club (below).

"Our mission is to be a strong voice for Alvechurch, taking an organised approach to protecting our village from inappropriate development, making sure residents' voices are heard.

"We want to support and encourage residents to be more actively involved in community issues, to protect and improve our historic village and protect and improve the quality of life for local people."

The association has adopted a constitution and elected nine committe members. Membership is open to any residents of Alvechurch parish who share the aims of "protecting the village from inappropriate development".

To contact the association, email: alvechurchresidents@gmail.com

The hotel application was discussed by Alvecurch Parish Council's planning committee, which drew a large number of villagers opposed to the plan. Chairman Marc Worrall told the full council meeting: "We had a lengthy debate and over all, we felt there were enough concerns to register an objection."

The application has been "called in" to be decided by Bromsgrove District Council's planning committee at a future meeting.

BARNT GREEN'S new flood level warning guage, installed by the parish council beneath the railway bridge by The Victoria pub, already proved its worth during a torrential downpour on July 8 when, as shown on this picture (left) by *Village* reader Aaron Price, the level was more than half a metre deep.

Concern on traffic from 200 homes

THE PRESSURE group campaigning against plans for more than 200 homes on part of The Abbey golf course at Bordesley has raised concerns about the impact on traffic in the area.

The North Redditch Communities Alliance (NoRCA) warns that it will affect everyone who uses the A441 between Redditch and the M42, increasing congestion and the potential for accidents around the Hither Green Lane junction, already a known bottleneck,

The campaigners say traffic figures submitted by the developers were measured just after the A441 through Bordesley had been subjected to seven months of roadworks, meaning the volume was around 30 per cent lower than usual.

"As this data will be used to assess the impact of traffic from the proposed development, it will most certainly underestimate the traffic impact," they said.

"NoRCA believes that this data should not be used as the criteria for assessing the impact the proposed development would have on traffic."

Meanwhile, Alvechurch Parish Council reaffirmed its objection to the development on the golf course at Hither Green Lane.

Field appeal

THE WOULD-BE developer of a Green Belt field (above) by the canal at Withybed Green, Alvechurch, has appealed against refusal to allow nine homes to be built on the site. A previous application to build 10 houses on the site was also refused as being inappropriate in the Green Belt. A planning inspector will now assess the decision.

'No objection'

AN APPLICATION to create 12 bedrooms in an extension of the Coach & Horses pub at Weatheroak Hill "is not seen as having a detrimental impact on the Green Belt" by Alvechurch Parish Council.

In recording "no objection" to the plan, the parish council says the pub "is a focal point and valued enterprise in Weatheroak and for its community. Its continued viability and commercial value needs to be protected",

It adds: "APC considers the proposals merit and meet the criteria that 'exceptional circumstances' genuinely exist. Therefore, APC has resolved to not object to this application in the Green Belt."

New direction

WITH INDEPENDENT councillors now playing a leading part at Bromsgrove District Council, plans for a return to a committee-based system of governance were agreed unanimously.

This will come into force in May 2024, with the independents supporting the re-election of Coun Karen May as leader to promote stability during the transition. Former Alvechurch parish councillor Sue Baxter is now deputy leader.

Meanwhile, long-standing Village independent councillor Charlie Hotham is the cabinet member for finance, while new councillors Rachael Bailes and Alan Bailes are members of a number of regula committees.

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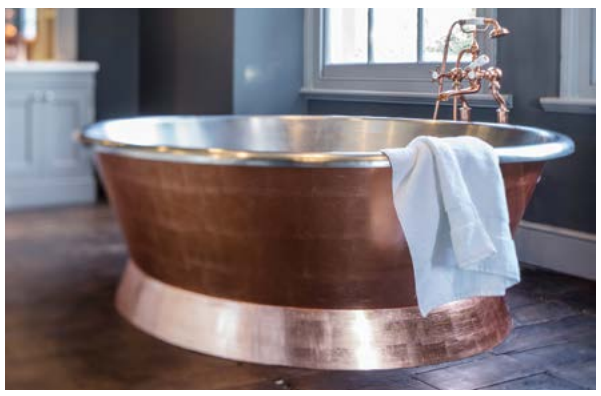

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HEART OF A WINNER

COFTON Hackett resident Stephen Farley won first prize at the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists Summer Show.

Stephen creates his pieces of art from his home studio in Cofton, a constant source of inspiration for his process.

The winning entry *Shield of She*, impressed the judges through technical merit and originality of media.

Stephen became an Associate of the RBSA last year and was one of 140 artists to enter the annual show which runs until July 22nd.

If Stephen looks familiar to you, it's likely that you will have seen him on the Lickey Hills, where he often walks in between creating sculptures to mull over the next piece he's working on.

Prize: Stephen Farley with his winning entry, *Shield of She*, on display.

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Parish news

Post Office consultation

We have received a positive response from our recent consultation questionnaire. We are therefore consulting with the Post Office and local partners, to consider suitable and available premises, given the communities desire to secure a counter service for Alvechurch.

Speedwatch

There is an opportunity for the Parish Council, together with volunteers from the local community, to set up a Community Speed Watch.

We need to have a minimum of five residents to put this forward in an area. If you are interested in participating, please contact the Parish Council Office on 0121 447 8016.

Meet the Councillors

We'll be holding further drop-in sessions where you can talk to our Councillors for Rowney Green and Bordesley – Cllrs Bailes, Hornsby and Thornton.

Come along on September 8th to the Goat and Trousers in Rowney Green, or the 15th at Meadow Farm pub, Bordesley.

Times will be published on our website and Facebook.

Unsung heroes in the community

We would like to recognise anyone who has positively enhanced the lives of others in our community; those who work quietly behind the scenes with a positive attitude, with a willingness to help in whatever capacity necessary, and a commitment to doing so, to a high standard.

Do you know someone deserving of this award? Send your nominations in to our Clerk at clerk@alvechurch.gov.uk

Biodiversity and the Wiggin Meadows

Mary Green has led several Alvechurch biodiversity group walks this spring to check on local habitats.

In May the first walk looked at the unmown verges in Alvechurch, the churchyard and the Wiggin Meadows. The second walk was altered to look at sustainably farmed meadows.

In the Meadows that are cared for by the Parish Council they found good habitat of many kinds, well looked-after. On the far right is woodland by the river, with remnants of ancient woodland flowers in wood anemones and wild garlic. On the far left beyond the horse chestnut avenue is more old woodland habitat with bluebells. The rarest part though is probably the old turf. This is at its best in the wildflower patch which has been let grow during the growing season for many years now. This has a rich variety of perennial wildflowers which must originally have covered the whole meadow.

As well as all the flowers on the new information board, this year we found Ragged Robin growing there again for the first time for years. We also found a spotted orchid growing right in the mown path. Two years ago, another spotted orchid was found on the left of the park near the horse chestnuts, here there is quite good flower-rich turf which has been mown on and off but is now being left longer between cuts and is recovering well.

Mary talked to the group about the importance of this old turf being allowed to grow and flower, helping it root well and act as a carbon sink as well as spreading valuable fungi underground. The orchids' importance is they show that this is ancient biodiverse and fungal-rich turf, the habitat for so many insects and other small creatures which then feed our birds and mammals.

Useful contacts

We have two new co-opted members from June's meeting: Sue Lambert and Barry Thornton. Further two vacancies will hopefully be filled at the July's Full Council meeting.

Alvechurch Village

Peter Freeman
Sue Lambert
Tony Williams
Keith Wiseman
Marc Worrall

Hopwood

Paul Edwards
Samantha Lewis

Rowney Green and Bordesley

Rachael Bailes
Stephen Hornsby
Barry Thornton

APC office

Jayne Smailes
Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer
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Fay Murphy
Assistant Clerk
assistantclerk@alvechurch.gov.uk

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‘Cheapskate’ challenge

Dear Editor – Since details of a proposed tiny “cheapskate” 20mph zone for Alvechurch village centre appeared in *The Village* magazine in March 2020 there have been a number of residents’ letters confirming that the scheme – that doesn’t even embrace any of our schools – is a failure.

The argument for changing 30mph limits to 20mph ones is pretty simple: the more slowly a car travels, the less kinetic energy it carries, so the less damage it causes in a collision.

Also, because stopping distances are shorter at lower speeds, the chances of having a collision in the first place are reduced; a driver’s visual field also widens the more slowly they go, allowing those travelling at 20mph to see more than those doing 30mph.

Collision data study findings confirm that only 5% of pedestrians hit at 20mph were killed, compared to 50% hit at 30mph.

Other studies have shown a 1mph reduction in average traffic speed is associated with a 5%-6% drop in injury-causing collisions.

As well as less severity of road injuries, 20mph zones produce a lower emission of air pollutants from accelerations and decelerations resulting in a lowering in exposure of the population to poor air quality. 20mph zones are also confirmed to result in a modal shift to walking and cycling; again reducing emissions of air pollutants.

Wales has already legislated for 20mph to become the national speed limit in urban areas, effective 17th Sept 2023. Scotland has committed to making 20mph the norm across all councils by 2025.

The Department for Transport guidance states, “it is expected Local Highway Authorities keep speed limits under review with changing circumstances and gives consideration to the introduction of more 20 mph limits and zones, over time, in urban areas and built-up village streets that are primarily residential”.

I am pretty sure Worcestershire Highways department has not undertaken any review of the ‘dogs breakfast’ of a scheme it imposed on residents, despite since having taken more than £30million in council taxes from us.

So, I now challenge all those councillors, who we never see or hear from but are elected to represent Alvechurch, to go and check on the effectiveness of the village-wide 20mph zones recently installed, just up the road, in Dickens Heath (population greater than Alvechurch) and Cheswick Green (population similar to Alvechurch).

As well as being village wide, the thing that immediately stood out for me was the visibility of the 20mph traffic signs which are about four times the size of the puny signs we have in Alvechurch and motorists did appear to be adhering to them.

Howard Allen
Alvechurch

Have your say . . . about anything!

email: editor@villageonline.co.uk
or write to: Letters, The Village, The Limes, Swan Street, Alvechurch B48 7RR

Please include your name and address – even if you request them to be withheld from publication. We reserve the right to edit submissions for reasons of space or legality.
The deadline for the next issue is August 1st 2023.

WHERE’S VINNY?

Crown Meadow First School pupil Stan Appleyard, aged seven, from Rowney Green, shows off the Mini Vinny he won for finding the little creature in June’s hunt the hedgehog competition in *The Village*.

If you want to win one for yourself, you’ll need to try to find the little hedgehog hiding somewhere in this magazine (the one shown above is just a guide).

Tell us where he’s hiding via email or post – see details on bottom of the page opposite – and please include your name, address and phone number, and we’ll draw a winner at random.

The closing date is midnight on August 1 2023. We’ll let you know if you’ve won and you can collect your Mini Vinny from our office – and pose for a photo with your prize!

Birders on song

Dear Editor – I have been reading with interest the regular Village magazine feature about birds by the Anonymous Birder.

I have for some time wanted to be able to identify the songs of our native birds as well as visiting ones.

It would be wonderful to be able to cock my ear and say to my companions, “ah the distinctive cooing of a dove” or “that’s a chiffchaff for sure”. That day hasn’t come yet, but I hope it will.

So, I was pleased when the Anonymous Birder offered to lead a walk for anyone wanting to improve their knowledge of identifying birds and their tweets.

We had an enjoyable walk down the canal one weekend morning, listening to, and spotting a plethora of different birds; blackbirds, robins, blackcaps, chiffchaffs, swallows, swifts, house martens, jackdaws, sparrows and moorhens with their little ones in tow.

I feel certain that I can now identify the sound both a robin and chiffchaff make as well as spotting the difference between flying swifts, swallows and house martins.

The Anonymous Birder made the walk informative with his knowledge and fun with his sense of humour. I am definitely looking forward to going on another walk if he (oops, they) offers one.

Suzanna Kyle, Bromsgrove
Birdlisteners’ Walk, *see page 47*

Searching for sausage recipe

Dear Editor – I live in Hopwood, and I used to use the local butcher, E J Crow in Alvechurch for its amazing sausages.

My family would travel from Worcester, Rubery and Kings Norton to buy them! The shop closed a few years ago and was sold. However, the new owners carried on for some time selling the “EJ Crow” award-winning sausages (three counties for several years I believe).

As I understand, one of the previous butchers came in one morning once a week to produce them. This stopped somewhat abruptly and I’m here to ask for help to find anyone that may know the secret recipe for the sausages. This started as a joke between my wife and I and it has now become a bit of a quest as all my family are missing them.

If anyone knows any information about the sausages, would they please reply to this letter, as I would love to start producing them again. Unfortunately, I don’t have any skill or expertise in this area but am willing to give it a go!

Mike Sutton, Hopwood

Whose hedge is it?

Dear Editor – In order to get the village centre looking as tidy a possible for Picnic in the Park, my son-in-law and I did some serious trimming on the pyracanthas hedge in front of the railings by the pathway through to Bear Hill opposite the bus shelter on Red Lion Street.

I unwisely volunteered myself for the task quite a few years ago, when

continues overleaf

continues from previous page

I was an Alvechurch parish councillor as no one else seemed to be responsible, and I have never been able to ascertain who owns it. It grows rapidly, and has grown more than three feet since last autumn and is viciously spikey. It looked an eyesore for picnic goers.

I would dearly like to hand the care and maintenance of the hedge over to someone else (something *The Village* managed to help with when I gave up managing the small triangle of garden, behind the dentists' surgery which was taken on by Mr Bowen, who has done an excellent job ever since).

So I write wondering if anyone would like to take on the management of this small hedge?

Peter McHugh, Alvechurch

Unruly: The hedge on Red Lion Street, Alvechurch, next to the cut-through to Bear Hill Drive.

CHARITY, CHUGGING AND CHAINGANGS

ESTABLISHED in 2005, the Barnt Green Chuggers (running) and Chaingang (cycling) are a non-profit community club, based at Barnt Green Sports Club.

They are affliliated with both England Athletics and Cycling UK, and cater for all running and cycling abilities – including those on electric bikes. The Chuggers and Chaingang both take part in local runs, sportives and charity events throughout the year. However, the clubs also pride themselves on their vibrant social calendar, hosting sporting and social events throughout the year.

On Monday 24 July, Barnt Green Chuggers are holding their summer Handicap 5k run and this year it is being opened to non-members (over 18s only).

Estimate your 5k pace, this could be running, walking or a mixture of both and submit your time prior to the date – the idea is everyone should finish together!

The event starts at 7.30pm at Barnt Green Baptist Church Playing Fields, where entrants will have the opportunity to try out the local friendly running club. The organisers hope that this will be great fun, and summer drinks will be held afterwards at Barnt Green Sports Club.

If you are interested in joining the Chuggers or the Chaingang, regular run sessions for Chuggers are Monday and Wednesday evenings, Chaingang rides are held on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings.

If you are interested in signing up for the 5k Handicap run, or are interested in joining Chuggers and Chaingang please contact Membership Secretary Kate Gallimore kategallimore@googlemail.com or visit the website www.barntgreenchuggers.co.uk

IN FOND MEMORY OF BETTY MANNING

BETTY MANNING, who for many years knitted the mini Vinnies for *The Village's* "Hunt the Hedgehog" competition, has passed away at the age of 88.

She was a member of the craft group Knit and Natter and kindly used her time to knit mini Vinnies, which have brought delight to the children (and adults) who have won the little creature over the years.

Betty, who had lived in Alvechurch since the early 1960s, was reportedly the first person to move into The Gaunts, off Snake Lane. She had three children, five grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

The Village would like to extend its appreciation for Betty's talented knitting over the years. Another volunteer from Knit and Natter has agreed to continue to make the mini Vinnies to allow "Hunt the Hedgehog" to continue.

CELEBRATING IN STYLE

Crowds joined **Cofton Park Manor** residents and team for a classic car show and an afternoon of fun, for the home's official opening.

MORE than 500 people turned up for the official opening of a new Bromsgrove care home which laid on entertainment for all the family.

The event saw dozens of classic cars roll up at luxury care home Cofton Park Manor, thanks to Pride of Longbridge members, giving visitors a chance to climb inside the spectacular vehicles and ask questions about their history.

Officially opening the new home on the day was community campaigner Gemma Cartwright, MBE. Gemma said: "It's an amazing honour to open Cofton Park Manor care home. We have come together to celebrate the outstanding facility of the care home and the heritage and community of Longbridge. It's been great to show a wide range of cars and share memories with those who worked at the local factories and are now residents of Cofton Park Manor."

Gemma was awarded an MBE in 2009 for her work in restoring hope in the community hit by the collapse of the Rover car plant in 2005, when 6,500 jobs were lost. She led a delegation to the House of Commons for the Rover Community Action Trust. Gemma said she was thrilled to be at Cofton Park Manor Care Home for the event which brought everyone together.

The afternoon bonanza also included a range of musical entertainment, BBQ and local craft stalls, plus plenty of ice cream. Even the sun came out for the busy family event.

The Lickey Road home opened for business in January, creating 45 jobs and offering residential, dementia and nursing care for local people.

Cofton Park Manor Regional Community Relations Lead Matthew Brown said: "It was wonderful to see so many here for the official opening and we are very grateful to Gemma and all the Pride of Longbridge members for being here and celebrating with us.

"We are very proud to be able to work here and provide a facility that will benefit so many people. We are looking forward to many great events and activities to come when we can invite the community into our home."

Singing in the sun: Guests had a wonderful day enjoying a variety of musical entertainment.

Above: Gemma Cartwright MBE(left) opens the care home. with Home Manager, Kerry Hill Right: Classic cars were on show, along with an edible replica.

Cofton Park Manor is part of Hamberley Care Homes, who were named Residential Care Provider of the Year in 2022 in recognition of their ground-breaking approach. To find out more about the luxury care home, and their exclusive offer for new residents, book your tour today on 01213 872722 or email Matt.Brown@hamberleycarehomes.co.uk

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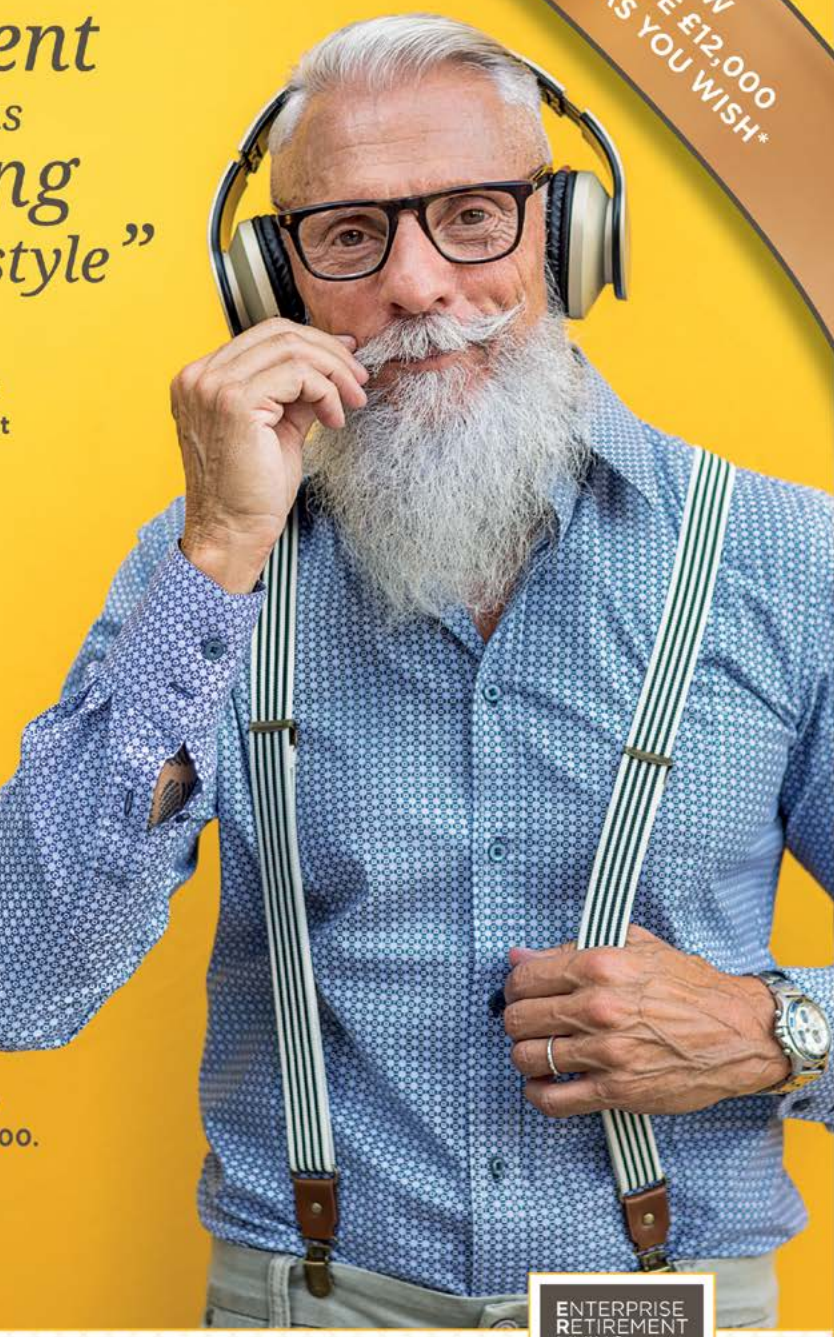

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Artist's impression: BW-SIPP Buntsford Business Centre.

CELEBRATION TIME FOR DIAMOND DUO

MORE than 100 people attended the official opening of the Clark brothers' new BW-SIPP Buntsford Business Centre in Bromsgrove in June.

The celebratory event marked the end of a 60-year journey for Douglas and Malcolm Clark, who have taken a prominent role in transforming the town's landscape, bringing prosperity to Bromsgrove and surrounding areas since the 1960s.

Guests enjoyed live jazz music, a sumptuous retro-style buffet and were able to view a selection of classic cars from the Clark brothers' private collection.

Town Crier, Kevin Ward, compered the event and John Truslove made the opening speech with a talk about the Clark brothers' life-long business partnership.

Sajid Javid MP performed the official ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Doug Clark said: "We never had any plans or blue-prints for our future, but we followed the words from a song by the late great George Harrison, 'If you don't know where you are going any road will take you there.'"

Celebration time: (from left) Town Crier Kevin Ward, Malcolm Clark, Sajid Javid MP, Douglas Clark.

Guests enjoy listening to John Truslove's opening speech.

A restoration of the first *Austin 7 Speedy* car to leave Longbridge.

20 From The Village archive Years Ago

IF THIS COVER of the July/August 2003 issue of *The Village* looks familiar, that's because we used it in this very spot in the last issue of *The Village* – in the absence of a June 2003 issue. We still don't know why there wasn't an issue in June 20 years ago, but the then-Editor tells us he thinks we just took a holiday!

Above: Members of Alvechurch Village Society's Footpath Group at work clearing the brook by Red Lion Street.

Right: Staff of David Matthews Insurance celebrate the firm's 30th anniversary in Alvechurch.

Above: Alvechurch FC under-9s enjoy their first annual presentation night in 2003.

10 From The Village archive Years Ago

A BEAUTIFUL dragonfly, photographed by reader Paul Wilde, featured on the cover of our July/August issue in 2013. Inside the magazine, we reported on village centres being freed of long-term parked cars "almost overnight" after new wardens were introduced as Bromsgrove council took over parking control from the police.

RESIDENTS SHOW THEIR STRENGTH

OAKALLS residents persuaded planners to reduce the number of homes – especially "affordable" ones – to be built on the Regent's Road site originally intended for shops and a pub (which they didn't want either).

Bromsgrove's planning committee went against the advice of their officers to agree to a revised plan for 25 new homes, of which only five would be affordable. This was instead of 39 new homes, with around 15 of these being affordable.

FAST START FOR FUTURE STAR

LAUREN Rowles, of Cofton Hackett, thanks staff at Alvechurch Middle School (right) who had helped to raise funds towards her aim of competing at the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio De Janeiro. Lauren later switched from wheelchair racing to rowing and won Gold in Rio, following it up with another Gold medal in Tokyo in 2020.

ROCK 'N' ROLL REUNION

ALVECHURCH Village Hall was filled with the sounds of the Sixties – and Fifties – when former and current members of The Rockin' Berries and The Swinging Chimes got together for an afternoon jam session (above).

THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR ALL

Caring for yourself when you care for others:

The number of unpaid caregivers in the UK has doubled since the 2011 census, when around 5.6 million adult carers were recorded.

Figures from Carers UK puts that number at 10.58 million in 2022: that's roughly one in five adults. Despite this, there is still very limited support for individuals from the government or employers, adding to the sense that unpaid carers are on their own.

This selfless army of unpaid carers who support friends and family as well as juggling their own lives and responsibilities, face often overwhelming pressure which can lead to burnout.

Lifting the burden with Promedica24 – Bev's Story

When Bev retired early, she didn't know how her life would change. It all started when Bev agreed to help an elderly friend and two family members with their shopping and cleaning.

What she didn't account for was that they would become completely reliant on her. Bev was trapped in a situation where they needed her and didn't trust anyone else.

Bev realised that something had to change when her husband convinced her to speak to a doctor because her own mental and physical health was suffering.

Bev then set about organising other people to care for her friend, who eventually accepted having someone else to clean and shop for her. Bev was still able to visit for a nice cup of tea and a chat but was no longer responsible for her friend's care.

Bev's relative was a bit trickier, as dementia was setting in and Bev had to organize an army of helpers on a rota to visit every evening to support with personal care.

In addition, Bev had to organise someone else to get her up, someone else to help her in the bath, liaise with meals on wheels, the gardener, laundry lady, hairdresser, nail technician, cleaning agency, shopping helper, and paying bills. If one element fell down, Bev's relative was very vulnerable.

After weeks of trying to juggle everything Bev contacted Promedica24, who were recommended to her by a family friend.

They quickly assessed Bev's relative's home, situation, and requirements. It wasn't long before a carer was in place taking care of all the requirements and needs.

Bev's relative enjoyed a fresh home-cooked meal at a sensible time. Before this, sometimes her meals were arriving after 2pm and not being served, which meant she either wouldn't eat or would try to put the tin foil dishes in the microwave or leave the oven on for hours.

Bev now has the peace of mind that someone is there to get her up and do all the daily tasks.

Bev says, "The weight and burden have been lifted for me and the responsibility is far less. There are still things to sort out for her, but I know that someone is there ensuring she is safe and well cared for. When I visit now, I have another person to discuss her care with, who really understands what she needs."

How Can Promedica24 Help?

Promedica24 is Europe's largest live-in care provider. As the name suggests, live-in care involves a specialist care provider moving into your home full time.

They offer 24-hour care that's tailored to your particular needs.

A live- in carer will typically help with domestic tasks, personal care, shopping and managing your medication.

Promedica24 offers a range of care packages to suit your needs from short term respite care, four, five, and six day packages, all the way up to 24/7 permanent live-in care.

Sharing the Cost of Care:

The cost of living crisis is having an impact on everyone, but it is especially challenging for those seeking support with their care.

To help in a small way, Promedica24 is offering a contribution towards new care packages starting between 1st June and 30th Sept 2023.

Ready to take the next step?

If you're exploring care options, consider reaching out to your local Promedica24 Care Consultant Cathy to learn more about how live-in care could be a great choice for you or your loved one:

Tel. +44 (0) 1905 677099
Mob. +44 (0) 7572 048060
E-mail C.Rice@promedica24.co.uk

Scan the QR code to learn more about live-in care with Promedica24.

POP GOES THE EASEL

A YEAR'S worth of work from a village art group, will be on display in July, celebrating their 11th annual exhibition.

The artists, whose works will be on display in Alvechurch Village Hall, are members of Pam McGregor's art groups.

This year, a number of Pop Art style pictures will be on display between 20 –22 July.

They were created as entries to a competition, set up and sponsored by Kamal Khan and Spring View Care, the owners of Tutnall Hall and Grosvenor House residential homes.

This is the eigth year that Kamal has challenged the artists to mimic an existing style of art, and this year he chose Pop Art.

The residents and staff at the two homes will select their favourites and the winning and runner-up pictures will then be on permanent display in one of the homes.

Commenting on the Pop Art challenge, art teacher Pam said: "This year Kamal's challenge gave the artists the chance to be flamboyant, although it started many conversations about exactly what constitutes Pop Art. I think visitors may be surprised but impressed with the results!"

Also on display in the hall will be up to 100 other new pieces of art that the members have produced over the last 12 months. Many of these pieces will be for sale at reasonable prices, allowing visitors to purchase unique art by local artists.

The exhibition will be open in Alvechurch Village Hall from 10am until 6pm on Thursday and Friday, (20th and 21st July) and from 10 am until 5pm on Saturday 22nd July.

Entry to the exhibition is free and refreshments will be available.

The group meet in Alvechurch Village Hall on Thursdays. More details about the art classes and previous exhibitions can be found at www.pamsartclasses.co.uk

OPEN DOORS FOR VILLAGE ARTISTS

TWO Alvechurch artists, Jane Aston (right) and Natasha Giles joined six other artists from the surrounding areas to form the North Worcestershire Art Collective, whosupport each other with their creative endeavours.

Some of the artists will be opening up their studios as part of the Worcestershire Open Studios Event between 19 – 28 August, to give villagers the opportunity to view local art, including Jane at her Alvechurch studio.

The group will also be holding their North Worcestershire Artist Collective Art Exhibition in Blackwell this year on 25 – 26 November. You can find out more about their open studio event at www. wocestershireopenstudios.org.

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Words & pictures by Keith Woolford

PICNIC IN THE SUN

THE morning of this year's Picnic in the Park dawned bright, sunny and warm; a relief to organisers, exhibitors and visitors alike.

An outstanding number of villagers visited The Meadows, Alvechurch, for the picnic. The entire picnic area was filled with blankets and camping chairs.

A spokeswoman for the event told Alvechurch Parish Council that next year they may have to expand the picnic area due to the volume of visitors.

The event kicked off with the dog show in the morning, which started earlier than in previous years, as it always proves an exceptionally popular part of the day. Maggie Scott, the Dog Show judge presented rosettes in all categories including 'Cutesy Dog, Prettiest Bitch and Handsomest Dog'.

There was a full entertainment line-up throughout the picnic, including BMRG Radio who covered the event all day. Dance clubs, choirs and musical performances kept villagers entertained thoughout the event.

There were also plenty of stalls, both new and familiar, raising money for charity and selling homemade goods for people to explore.

Although the hoped-for pony rides didn't materialise for 2023, the Bumper Karz and Spinning Cups more than made up for their absence, and plenty of fun was had by all.

A particular highlight, as expected, was the flyover by the Hurricane and Spitfire planes, which soared over the park to everyone's delight.

The organisers told us that this year, there had been more stalls than ever to explore, some who had never exhibited at the picnic before.

This year, the picnic raised £2,679, most of which has been donated to charities including The Lounge and Cramar Cat Sanctuary.

Full of fun: The picnic area was full to the brim of happy picnic-ers.

Clockwise from above Left: A playful entrant to the dog show. One highly talented dog plays a ukelele. Dog Show Entrants for 'Prettiest Bitch' category.

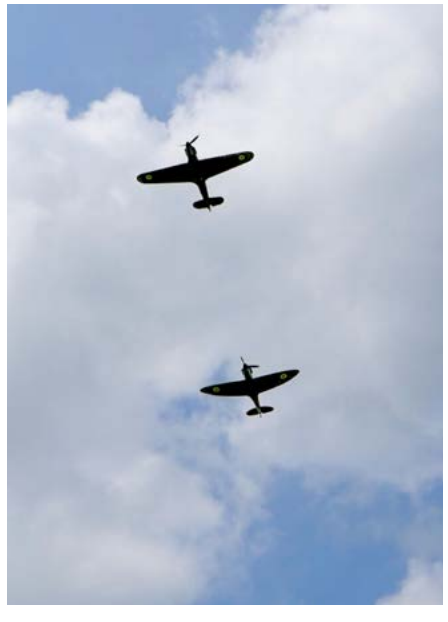
Clockwise from top left: The park begins to fill up. Fun on the dodgems. Alvechurch Community choir performs for the crowd. PITP logo winner Betsy and runner-up Amy. The PITP team enjoy the day in high-vis. Amy Greaves School of Dance pose for a photo. Delight on the dodgems. Alvechurch Parish Council Chairman Marc Worrall and Sue Moxon enjoy a break.

continues from previous page

Clockwise from left: A talented dog show entrant. Cheerleaders from Fireworks Cheerleaders show off their scales. Logo winner Betsy Gibbs opens the event. Dog show entrants show off their beauty and parade around the arena.

Clockwise from above: The team from Alvechurch Community Larder. Hungry customers enjoy a hog roast. District Councillor Aled Luckman and Parish Councillor Marc Worral with BluWave Community Transport. Raising money for Birmingham Children's Hospital.

Clockwise from above: A big group of picnicers enjoy the warm weather. The Picnic in the Park sound crew. 'Handsomest Dog' entrants with winner Jessica Smith and Odin. Shulah Oliver and Sophie Combes from The Midland Sinphonia entertain the crowds. Dog show judge Maggie Scott admires one of the entrants. The Cramar Cat Rescue volunteers show off their stall. Classic cars impress villagers. Two young villagers pose with painted faces.



Clockwise from above left: Alvechurch Village Society demonstrate how to use a stile. A young villager enjoyed having their face painted. Fly bys from the Hurricane and Spitfire, pleased the crowd. CPSO Hyder shares his helmet.

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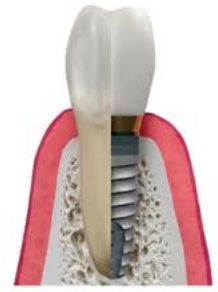
Karun Dewan, Consultant in Restorative Dentistry and Dental Implantologist

Benefits of implants

- ✓ Natural and enhanced appearance
- ✓ Just like a real tooth
- ✓ Superior comfort
- ✓ More efficient chewing
- ✓ Improved speech
- ✓ Can help prevent bone loss
- ✓ Supports your face shape
- ✓ One or more missing teeth can be replaced
- ✓ Long lasting solution for tooth loss

Types of implant

- ✓ **Single implant** : High quality definitive solution for one missing tooth.
- ✓ **Multiple implants** : Suitable for 2-5 missing teeth per arch. Multiple teeth can be placed on individual implants.
- ✓ **Full Arch Replacement** : A complete restoration solution including patients with denture problems or to avoid a removable denture.



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BEST FOOT FORWARD

IF you have walked down Red Lion street, Alvechurch recently, you might notice *The Foot Place*; a new chiropodist and expert foot care clinic, will be opening this July by Rachael Shaw.

Rachael, who has almost 30 years' experience and has worked with sports clubs, professional dancers and in hospitals and retirement villages, will be offering her foot care services from the centre of Alvechurch.

The demand for chiropody care has increased post-pandemic and The Foot Place will offer villagers a range of expert services and treatments, all carried out to the highest standards of hygiene.

Rachael is keen to make sure that The Foot Place is accessible for all, and offers early morning and evening appointments from the clinic, which is in an accessible, ground floor location in Alvechurch.

Whether you're experiencing an ongoing issue or a new problem, The Foot Place's services will be able to help with your footcare needs, including:

- Routine chiropody
- Removal of corns and hard skin
- Verruca assessment and treatment
- Treatment of ingrown toenails
- Treatment and advice on fungal nail and skin disorders
- Diabetic foot care

And much more!

So next time you walk past The Foot Place, consider how long you've neglected your feet for, they carry us round all day, and deserve a bit of extra care sometimes.

The face behind the feet: Rachael Shaw, chiropodist.

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KNOW WHAT'S 'NORMAL'

This month, Dr Heidi Kerr and Dr Vicky Hobbs, from **VHK Women's Health Clinic** discuss the significant impact the menopausal transition can have on women's work, health and lifestyles.

Don't suffer in silence: Seek help in understanding your body and managing painful or uncomfortable symptoms *Image: Shutterstock*

VHK hosted an evening charity event in June at The Garrity in Barnt Green, on Perimenopause, HRT and Desire. We would like to extend a big thank you to our fellow speakers and all the guests for coming along.

Our feedback confirmed how empowering having trusted, accurate information on our health can enable us to make better decisions.

We are fast learning about the significant impact that the menopausal transition can have on women, both at home and in the workplace.

Daily stories appear in mainstream press, social media and now this area of women's health is being discussed in parliament.

There are multiple other conditions, related to the menstrual cycle, that can affect a female's performance in daily life.

All too often we hear accounts of young teenagers missing school, college or university, or women making polite excuses as to why they are unable to attend work, all because of the impact that heavy menstrual bleeding or pelvic pain can have.

Whilst many women only bleed for five days per month and day 1-2 may be the most impactful, this amounts to 24 days per year when they may not be able to continue with normal activities.

There can be many reasons for heavy or painful menstrual bleeding including fibroids, and endometriosis.

Often women experience worse periods at each end of their reproductive life, as young teenagers and entering the perimenopause.

Understanding what is normal and when to seek help is key.

For the average woman her monthly blood loss will be between 30-50 millilitres and a standard strength tampon holds about 5ml.

Whilst it is not always easy to estimate how much blood you are losing each month, signs that you should look out for is flooding (bleeding through your clothes or onto bedding), becoming anaemic because of the amount you lose and understanding when it is impacting your well-being such as avoiding leaving the house.

If your period is lasting more than seven days or you are having a period more frequently than every 21 days, these are signs that you may need to seek further help.

The good news is that there are many treatments to help women including hormones taken as tablets, such as the combined contraceptive pill or as a hormonal coil. But if you do not wish to take hormones, there are other non-hormonal tablet options.

The levonorgestrel hormone coil has the added benefit that it can also be used as part of an HRT regimen, and it offers very safe and reliable contraception.

At VHK Women's Health Clinic we support women and help to reduce the impact heavy periods may have on day-to-day life offering assessments and treatment plans including fitting hormone coils.

Raising awareness in wider society and enabling women to feel more confident in managing their symptoms is vital.

The British Standards Institution have released their workplace standard on menstrual and menopausal health, a welcome and timely step forward and we encourage all employers to support their employees and managers in understanding more about how menstrual health affects women's lives.

We offer education to managers and employees on all aspects of women's health as well as offering face to face consultations at our clinic in Bromsgrove.

For help and advice in managing your symptoms of perimenopause and other health concerns, book your appointment with VHK Women's Health Clinic: www.vhkwomenshealth.com

FUN IN THE SUN and rain!

Words & pictures by Keith Woolford

BLACKWELL celebrated its 14th annual Village Festival in June, with crowds of families and groups erecting gazebos and tents around the perimeter of St Catherine's playing fields.

Organiser, Emma Westwood, held a community consultation which determined the theme for this year's festival; a traditional village fete!

Classic village fete games and activities including hook-a-duck, splat-a-rat, bouncy castles and face painting kept both children and adults entertained.

The welly wanging competition proved particularly popular –and competitive! – with village children.

To encourage visitors to make the most of the games, villagers were provided with a card to be stamped at each games stall. Once completed, the card could be exchanged for a bag of sweets.

The competition continued with a Tug of War, which resulted in a tense "Battle of the sexes" round. With fierce determination (and a little help), the women deservedly won!

A cake competition was held in the St Catherine's WI & Church tea tent, where judge Alison presented first place to young villager Georgia.

A food wagon and the music festival beer tent were popular and kept festivalers fed and watered throughout the day.

Live music concluded the festival, with four-man band "The Bizz" performing, just as the heavens opened.

After an afternoon of scorching temperatures (the ice cream also proved very popular), villagers welcomed the rain and danced through the intermittent downpours as "The Bizz" rounded off the Festival.

The plans for the next Blackwell festival are fully underway; Blackwell Music Festival will be held on Saturday 9 September, so look our for ticket sales.

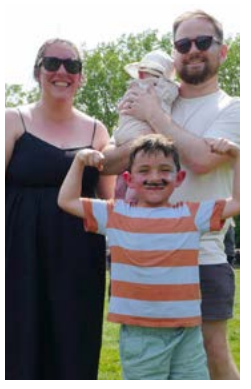
Festival organisers prepare themselves with a team lie-down on the parachute.

The St Catherine's WI and church tea tent providing cakes and drinks for villagers.

Hoop toss entertainvillagers of all ages.

Splat the Rat, a popular village fete game.

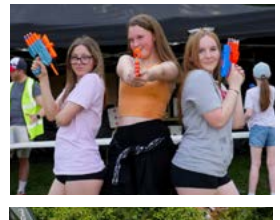
Villagers shelter from the hot sun together under gazebos.

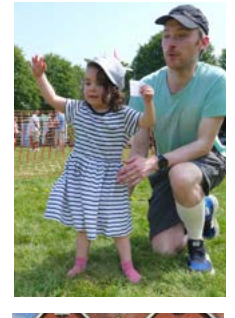


Clockwise from top left: The Bizz entertains through all weathers; a young musician shows off his talent; dressed for a festival; the event team are recognisable in hi-vis; a young strong man shows off his muscles; judge Alison with 'Best Cake' winner Georgia; a young violinist plays a tune; one young villager with a painted face.

The food van proved a success!

Keeping cool with some drinks.





Clockwise from top left: Have these guys been practising their moves together? Welly wanging – very popular; enjoying catching up with friends and family with drink and good food; Charlie's Angels make an appearance.

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GETTING STARTED

This month, **Martin Pryor** explains what to expect when you first engage a financial planner, including why they gather so much information from you, why their work benefits you, and how they can save you money.

IN my last article for *The Village*, I wrote about the deeper questions a financial planner may ask you to really get to know you and your outcomes in life.

Once we really understand who you are as a person, what you really want to achieve and perhaps understand how you may adapt to certain life events we need to gather some personal data from you.

Financial planning is very much an art and a science, we have the art of your personal psychology or behaviour, the 'soft data', and we also have the science and logic of the numbers and calculations, the 'hard data'.

GATHERING YOUR INFORMATION

The questions we ask cover the personal 'soft data', so how do we gather the 'hard data' and what do we need to know?

It can be a lot of information that we need to obtain, and each planner will gather this information in various ways.

At PPM Financial Planning we appreciate the difficulty and sometimes frustration it can cause providing this information, often because our clients are successful and therefore busy individuals with family, business and community/charity commitments, we need to make this process smooth and easy for them.

We gather information relating to the client's personal and family affairs, such as family names and dates of birth, we need this because planning is often generational, and we can only provide a comprehensive service if we have the whole picture.

We also ask about medical and hereditary medical conditions; if you have longevity in your genes, it's good for us to know so we can ensure we plan for this, we wouldn't want you running out of money, at any age! Or conversely medical conditions can affect protection contract underwriting.

We also need to get to know your ALIE (Assets, Liabilities, Income and Expenditure) which we refer to as every financial planner's best friend; we need to know your assets; items that you own which have a value such as your home, your investment portfolio, pensions and money in the bank.

We need to know your liabilities; such as your mortgages, loans and any other debts, if you have these. Your income, often this can be a complex area where income is derived from various sources, so it is easier for your planner to work directly with the family accountant or tax adviser.

Having an experienced financial planner really is worth their weight in gold because reviewing your income, is often where considerable tax savings can be obtained.

Then finally perhaps the most important of all parts, and certainly the most difficult to get accurate is the expenditure.

Expenditure is a tricky item because no one-year is the same as the next and no one-month is the same as the last.

Itemising your regular direct debits can be easy, but I will often meet with a new client at their planning meeting and say "congratulations you have £X remaining each year that you could …" and they look at me with a blank stare and say "no we don't!".

Getting your expenditure or spending profile right is essential for any financial plan to be robust, getting it right can take years.

I don't need to agonise over the last £1,000pa but ensuring you're happy with our assumptions is necessary. Having an experienced planner here can also add value, because we know what to look for, for example, if your expenditure analysis shows you with a large surplus of income over expenditure, but you've been unable to save a penny in the last 12 months, where's the money gone?

All spending should be accounted for, even if we allocate this to a miscellaneous spend, or as we like to call it a wild living allowance. An experienced planner will also know what expenditure may be incurred in the future for children's school or university fees, later life when you may decide to stop motoring or require help around the home, or on death.

We need to gather information on policies and contracts that you have already arranged, ensuring that they both have been arranged correctly and remain relative and competitive in today's market.

PENSIONS

The complexities around pensions are too numerous to detail, but needless to say higher earners and those with larger pension schemes, relative to their age, benefit significantly from having their pensions reviewed on an ongoing basis.

ESTATE PLANNING

Good estate planning is an essential part of the financial planning process and ensuring your will has been written is our first step. It no longer surprises me to hear that a new client has not written a will, but we want all our clients with a will that is written correctly to ensure it benefits you and your overall financial situation.

WILLS & TRUSTS

We like to use trusts to control the direction of flow of money either during your lifetime, or on death and also to provide a layer of protection against what we refer to as "hostile creditors".

Trusts were once only for the ultra-wealthy and can be associated with tax avoidance, but neither are true today. Trusts can help the everyday man or woman and all trusts are now registered with HMRC to ensure they are used with the purpose they were originally intended for.

Knowing the whole financial picture and having access to the wills and trusts makes a financial planner probably the only profession able to offer truly comprehensive advice on the client's estate planning and inheritance tax liability. We're happy to work closely with the family's other professional advisers to ask them to write wills and trusts, or alternatively we have good relationships with experienced firms ourselves.

LASTING POWER OF ATTORNEY

Finally, we like all our clients to have Lasting Powers of Attorneys that are registered with the Office of Public Guardian, this way we know, if life delivers an unexpected accident, the family's financial plans are not completely thrown out the window.

So, as you can see, engaging with a financial planner as a new client means opening up and sharing a lot of your personal information, but the long-term benefits mean you have a professional on your side, who works with other clients with situations like yours so you can accelerate your financial and life goals and gain from their experience, rather than learning yourself.

Also please don't ever compare an internet search with the decades of learning and experience a qualified Financial Planner can offer, I wouldn't trust Google to diagnose the treatment to a medical condition, nor would I trust Google to secure my family's financial future.

Martin Pryor
Lifestyle Financial Planner

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How equity release can help in your retirement

Mark Meads outlines how equity release can benefit travel, helping family, and independence in your retirement.

Mark Meads (right) is here to help you as you navigate your finances.

PEOPLE often ask me: "what are the main reasons for releasing equity from a property?"

There are many reasons why you may choose to release equity, however some of the most common ones can help improve your lifestyle in your retirement, allowing you to live the life you want:

■ To supplement retirement income: Many retirees find that their pension or savings are not enough to cover their expenses in later life. Equity release can provide a source of additional income that can help them maintain their standard of living.

■ To pay off debts: Equity release can be used to pay off outstanding debts, such as interest only mortgages credit card balances or loans, which can reduce financial stress and improve cash flow.

■ To make home improvements: Homeowners may choose to release equity in their property to fund home renovations or repairs, which can improve their quality of life and increase the value of their home.

■ To help family members: Some people choose to release equity to help their children or grandchildren, for example, by providing a deposit for a property purchase or funding education.

■ To go on holiday or travel: Equity release can provide the funds needed to take a dream holiday or travel to new destinations, which can be a rewarding experience for retirees.

■ To maintain independence: Equity release can help older homeowners to stay in their own home and maintain their independence, by providing the funds needed to pay for care or support services.

To see how we can help with all your mortgage needs, including equity release, please call us on: 0121 445 1227. Or contact via the website: www.villagefinancial.co.uk

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Spot the satellite

Amateur astronomer **Brian Watkiss** peers into the *Village* night sky.

SCHOOL holiday time is here (hooray) and we can stay up late and watch the skies (hooray again).

Unfortunately sunset is still relatively early so it doesn't get dark until well after 10pm, at least to start with. Towards the end of August, it's a little after nine so that's better.

Sadly, we have to say goodbye to Venus for time being as it is now so close to the Sun that it is barely visible in the glow, very close to the horizon and sets just an hour after the Sun. It will start to appear in our morning skies in September though.

There's still plenty to look out for in our less-than-dark evening skies as this is the best time of year for satellite spotting. A comfy chair is all that is required although it helps to have as wide a view of the sky as possible and maybe some pleasant company and a beverage of some kind. Then just stare at the sky.

It won't be long before you will spot a dot drifting across the sky, some fairly obvious, some only just discernible. If they have flashing lights and make a noise then that's probably an aeroplane.

The majority of them are spent rocket bodies as these are large and mostly painted white. Being uncontrolled, they usually end up tumbling as they orbit making their brightness vary. All can be identified via the website heavens-above.com. You do have to enter your location though or it won't work, it defaults to somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.

Summer skies: Venus, and the International Space Station in the glow of sunset. *Pictures courtesy of NASA.*

The very brightest of all is, unsurprisingly, the International Space Station. This has its own section on heavens above which shows when it is visible and even better, its track across the sky. Just click on the relevant date to produce a sky chart and even a map of its track over the ground. Being about the size of a football pitch, it is incredibly bright and unmistakable.

During August, two spacecraft are due to launch to it, one to take fresh supplies and one to take fresh astronauts, so it may be worth looking out for these, too.

It is, incidently, exactly 12 years since the last flight of a Space Shuttle to the station this month.

While you're out watching all this space hardware, you may also notice bright flashes streaking across the sky. These are meteors or shooting stars and through most of July and August there are plenty of them as Earth passes through the trail of debris left by comet Swift Tuttle, peaking on August 13.

Floating above us: The International Space station.

The majority of these are mere specks of dust or the brighter ones may be the size of a grain of sand.

All are spectacular though and are over before you get chance to even speak. If you find yourself having difficulty in speaking though, it may be time to call a halt to the evening's observations.

SUMMER SCORCHER

Alvechurch amateur weatherman **Phil Thomas** records the changes.

THERE was a changeable and wet start to May, with lots of showers and colder weather than expected.

However there was only 1mm of rain in the second half of May, and there were many sunny days during this time, with 183.5 hours of sunshine, 109% of the average. This very dry half of the month was due to a large area of high pressure blocking any rain bearing systems.

June continued dry, and was recorded as one of the hottest Junes the UK has experienced. A mean temperature of 17.2C was 2.2C above the local average, and there was some very hot weather which continued towards the end of the month.

This hot, dry weather was broken up with thundery and wet weather around the 11th and the 18th of the month. Despite sunshine being recorded at 135% of what we would expect for June, rainfall was recorded at 70.7mm, making up 101% of the average.

A mixture of sunshine and showers continued into July, and we experienced heavy rain and some thunder early in the month, accompanied with strong winds moving Northeast.

The Outlook

LATER in July, the weather will remain cool with sunny spells and showers, these will be most frequent in the north and west.

Southeastern areas will potentially turn drier and more settled for a time, however rain approaching the west will likely bring fresher conditions and could be preceded by thunderstorms.

Temperatures for July are likely to trend upwards with the potential for a spell of very warm weather – or even hot weather – as we progress further into the month.

It's hard to predict August, but we all wonder, will it be as hot as 2022?

Above: Bright blue skies on a hot June day.

Sunshine through the clouds.

A butterfly has a rest – possibly from the very warm weather.

May 2023

Mean Max	17.9C	0.9C above average
Mean Min	7.8C	0.4C above average
Mean	12.7C	0.6C above average
Rainfall	39.7mm	60% of average
Sunshine	183.5hrs	109% of average

June 2023

Mean Max	22.6C	2.9C above average
Mean Min	11.8C	1.5C above average
Mean	17.2C	2.2C above average
Rainfall	70.7mm	101% of average
Sunshine	225.4hrs	135% of average

More information at ***www.alvechurchweather.metsite.com*** You can see an improved HD weather-cam, updated at one-minute intervals, at: ***www.alvechurchweather.metsite.com/webcam_alvechurch.php***

A green winged orchid, found in Withybed.

DO ORCHIDS MATTER?

Mary Green takes us through some of the biodiversity walks she has led, and explains why we should care about orchids.

IN this hot weather it's hard to remember the rather cold spring we had and its effect on wildlife. Everything was late this year but writing this in June I think everything has really done well so far and may be catching up.

I have had a series of my biodiversity walks this year. We've seen fascinating things, and things that illustrate the perilous state of our natural environment.

In March we walked along the canal down from Withybed Green. I'd expected the hedges to be full of blackthorn blossom and hawthorn leaf, but they weren't there yet. We were able to see though how continuous the flowering trees and hedges were most of the way, full of buds ready to break out. We saw some odd flowers – cow parsley and garlic mustard – which had been flowering all winter in the mild weather: the rest of their kind was no-

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where near ready to flower yet. We did see the first early spring flowers – a few celandines and coltsfoot along the sides of the towpath.

One plant we could see very clearly was a vibrant green one called dog's mercury, a sign of old woodland. It starts to appear quite soon along the hedge by the canal.

Then as you near the moorings at Alvechurch there is more and more of it – and a little wood beside you. This little wood fringes on to a rough area with brambles and nettles, where there was once a caravan site.

Local people tell me they remember picking wood anemones in the wood, and one man remembers finding adders in the old caravan site.

We talked about snakes. Adders have disappeared from round here but survive elsewhere in Britain. They were common on the farm where I grew up in Devon and I once found a nest of young ones and went to pick them up thinking they were slow worms! However, many of us have seen grass snakes round here. They go in water as well as on land, so if you think you've seen a water-snake if will have been a grass snake.

In the bushes this time we spotted a goldcrest, our smallest bird, like a painted wren.

Here we saw the new orchard trees planted by the local canal society on behalf of the Canal and Rivers Trust.

We discussed tree planting, which is often ill advised, in places which are already biodiverse and sequestering carbon, or in places they will not survive. But this is a good site as it's where the rough patch is, filled with rubble and dredgings after the caravans went, and growing mostly brambles and nettles because we had destroyed its biodiversity. The trees will add diversity and their flowers will provide nectar for insects, their fruit being there for humans and birds!

Near the Station Road bridge is a patch of wildflowers where there used to be a plum orchard, grubbed out by Network Rail ten years ago.

The patch has been left uncut till this winter when a volunteer cut part of it by hand. He found some good

An unusual sight on the canal: A pyramidal orchid.

young hawthorn and blackthorn trees growing. On the part he cut, the coltsfoot came back en masse, whereas in the uncut part it couldn't get a look-in.

Looking at it now in June, it looks much the same all over, full of beautiful flower including knapweed, bedstraw, moon daisies, hogweed and vetches.

Further along the canal we reached Scarfield Dingle where there is one of the oldest oaks in the village and lots of dog's mercury.

From here on for a quarter of a mile there are a lot of old woodland remnants on both sides of the canal and the waterway must have been cut through woodland.

On the left after a while is a proper little bit of woodland with a big old ash tree and bluebells, a sure sign. We could see the leaves just coming in March. We also noticed that this stretch down to Grange Lane, which

Spot pignuts in Alvechurch verges.

used to have very clipped hedges and therefore lost some of its biodiversity, had been left to grow out a bit more this year.

Usually the canal is such a good wildlife corridor because the hedges and trees are allowed to grow out and flower and fruit.

Unfortunately, soon afterwards the C&RT had already done a cut of the flowering plants by the path, and have done it twice since. Mostly it's not too bad as they just mow a narrow strip and leave the rest, but now in some places along this stretch they have mowed right up into the hedge and even up a raised bank.

You may remember the unusual pyramidal orchid, this walking group found last year here. Well, this year it's been comprehensively mown down, despite C&RT having a precise reference for its location. More on orchids later . . .

In May, we decided to go round Alvechurch and look at street-side and village habitat as the verges had not been cut.

Just coming down from Withybed we found a bank with dozens of wild flowers including some pignut, that marker of old meadow and pasture.

Most verges were diverse, and common flowers included buttercups, daisies, medick, birds foot trefoil, cow parsley, speedwell, clover, moon daisies and sorrel. We found more pignut later up Station Road along with lady's smock, Good Friday grass and bistort. We even found a big mushroom – a St George's mushroom, one of the few which comes in spring.

Even some of the lawns in front gardens were biodiverse, full of speedwell, cowslips, clover, daisies and buttercups.

We admired one of the group's front lawn. They moved in last year and this is the first time I've seen that lawn unmown - it was full of Good Friday grass, daisies, speedwell and buttercups. Later it has had self-heal, moon daisies and a wonderful range of native grasses. They must have lain underground for decades, trying to come up!

We walked through the churchyard which had unfortunately been half mown the previous day but still had flower-rich patches, full of pignut, birds foot trefoil, Good Friday grass and buttercups.

The churchyard has great ancient turf which holds carbon and should provide nectar and seeds for insects and birds, but only a small area is left unmown to flower and seed. The trees were in full flower though, and it's one of the places we noticed how profuse the flowers are on holly this year, along with lots of little holly blue butterflies.

I've since visited many churchyards

Coopers Hill: A young flowering hedge, found in the fields.

In the meadows: Above, spotted orchid leaves. Below, wildflowers.

in our area which have beautiful flower-rich grass, allowed to grow naturally.

We then reached the Wiggins Meadows where the wildflower patch was wonderful, though the early flowers like goldilocks and cowslip had gone and the summer ones not yet come. The pignut and buttercups were flowering well.

Right in the middle of the path we found a spotted orchid, just showing a bud. I knew they had been seen in the Meadows – Matthew the groundsman found one a few years ago – but this

Flower rich patches: Found in the churchyard.

was the first I've seen. We found Matthew and asked him to move the path through so the orchid could come up into flower.

The turf on the far left was doing well too, full of pignut and buttercups. The wooded areas on both sides were looking good with bluebells in one and wild garlic in the other.

Matthew did move the path but unfortunately due to a mix-up, a contractor re-mowed the old path a few days later and destroyed the orchid.

I did however find a lovely patch of ragged robin there the next week,

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which I haven't seen there for ages, while trying to find the orchid.

Do orchids matter? Well, they are symbolic of the old meadow and pasture systems we used to have when our farmed landscape was biodiverse, and full of insects, mammals and birds.

They only survive in these habitats and are very dependent on their fungal networks under the ground. Once they would have been common – you'd have seen them every day. So they represent places where a biodiverse habitat has persisted, or been re-established.

When we went to repeat the walk a few days later we couldn't, because the verges had all been mown. Even the parts that our local councillor had agreed should not be mown, had been. Another mistake. It's a small example of how Britain has become one of the least biodiverse countries in the world – by mistake, rather than on purpose.

Instead, we walked up the fields from Withybed through Cooper's Hill Farm and back down Birches Lane.

These hay meadows have been re-established as biodiverse – I wrote about them last time. From the path we couldn't see the green-winged orchids near the start of the first field, but I know they're there.

Near the top of this field, you can see spotted orchids from the path. Other meadow flowers were appearing – buttercups of course, clover, yellow rattle, bluebells under the trees, and lovely pignut near the top. The hedges, old and new, were wonderful, full of hawthorn blossom. The ancient woodland down Cooper's Hill was full of bluebells and in Birches Lane we found holly flowers (and lots of holly blue butterflies), sweet woodruff, yellow archangel and wild service trees.

We found a beautiful shivery grass called wood Mellick. You could feel the richness of nature around you.

As well as these walks, I accompanied the Alvechurch Walking Buddies on a walk through Peck Wood in April, full of bluebells, and Eades Meadow in May, where there are four different orchids. Both of these are protected nature reserves.

Sadly, it would be easy to take walks and see where biodiversity has been destroyed, but in these walks we deliberately set out to find a good range of plant habitats which host many insects, birds and mammals.

It is a pleasure to walk through them and the more you look, the more you see.

I intend to do some more walks on 1 and 2 August, starting at 10.30am from Alvechurch Station.

■ **Here's a poem (right) I wrote at the Picnic in the Park at the end of May.**

Spotted orchids: **These can be seen from the fields in Withybed.**

Whitsunday

The face-painter says: what's your favourite colour?
Rainbow, the girl says. And the field's a rainbow.
Whatever the spirit is has come down here.
The green man has touched it all alive
Grass frothing with white pignut and hawthorn
Splashes of red ragged-robin, buttercup gold.
Then the summer clothes dug from the wardrobe
Bright and silly against the white new legs.
I try to like even the bombers, seeing them
Not as machines to kill without being near,
But as the marvellous work of human hands
Translated into birds, looping above.
In the queue for the loo, I start to talk
About folk memory and history
And music and poetry. Sitting in the sun
I reminisce with someone about the war
That conceived us, and how we hate to see
Its scars now on the TV. The dog show barks,
People take selfies in the wildlife patch.
This year the sound system doesn't let us down:
Singer, musicians, dancers, painted rainbow
Sing, move and play for sun and life and hope.

The anonymous birder

How to enjoy village birdlife

A BIT OF BIRDLISTENING

This month I am going to report on our "birdlistening" walk when some *Village* readers interested in identifying local birdsong joined me for a morning.

A lovely late May Saturday saw a group of seven including myself, anonymity blown, gather at Alvechurch train station. A walk to Upper Bittell reservoir was planned, but after 20 minutes we were still in the car park picking out the finer points of a blackcap's song and having a general chat about birdsong and the birdwatching experiences of the group.

That's the thing about birdwatching and listening: anywhere offers possibilities and interest.

The aim of the walk was to be able to identify just a few of our common singers, which then allows us to make sense of the general (lovely) cacophony of birdsong. Once you've got a few you recognise, it is then easier to pick out something different from the familiar, like picking out familiar faces in a crowd and then focusing on the ones you don't know.

The blackcap is one of our common summer visiting birds known collectively as warblers. You may have seen one occasionally appearing on your bird feeder. It is very common in the Midlands and very easy to hear on a daily basis during the singing season.

The "nightingale of the north" has a rich and complex song and takes a bit of time to sort. Luckily the onomatopoeically named chiff chaff also chimed in, our other common visiting warbler and very easy for the aspiring birdlistener to pick up on.

It can be initially confused with the "teacher teacher" call of the great tit, but once identified, it will be forever more your musical harbinger of spring, arriving in the second, or more commonly, third week of March.

Some nerdy folk, no names mentioned, will send text messages to each other on hearing first songs or first sightings of the year.

Watch the birders: **The 'birdlistening' group have a laugh as the Anonymous Birder tries to keep his identity hidden.**

Luckily the group didn't decide they'd had enough before exiting the car park, so with the two common warblers under our belts we pressed on to the canal.

Swallows gathering on the wires over the tracks offered an opportunity to discuss the perennial problem of what separates a swallow from a swift from a martin.

Now to listen for some of our common singers. The relaxed jazz performance of a blackbird duly obliged. An absolute treat once tuned in to. Although birdsong rises throughout the year, peaking in May then declining as the breeding season finishes, I have had the treat of a virtuoso performance each morning and evening from a resident blackbird all through June and into July from its favourite singing post, the top of an oak tree.

It's not a repetitive song like a chiff chaff, more an improvised collection of musical phrases unique to each individual.

As we proceeded along the tow path, robin and wren song were picked out. The robin with its distinctive wistful, watery song and the wren with a machine gun blast of repetitive notes. One of, if not the loudest song, from one of our smallest resident birds.

Lots of other pleasant diversions were seen or heard, but we stuck to our main goal and the group tuned in with increasing confidence.

If you are interested in becoming a birdlistener, and knowingly or not we all are, this birdlistening group along with the song thrush's crystal clear, repeating performance, would be a good starting point.

Finally, as we reached Lower Bittell, the better part of two hours had flown by (sorry), leaving the water birds for another time.

Many thanks to all the participants for very enjoyable morning immersed in the sights and sounds of local nature. See you on the next one.

Meanwhile I couldn't resist making a list of birds seen or heard without really trying: blackcap, chiff chaff, whitethroat, robin, wren, blackbird, nuthatch, blue tit, dunnock, mallard, moorhen, mandarin duck, greenfinch, goldfinch, swallow, swift, various gulls, jackdaw, crow, starling, magpie and woodpigeon. **JL**

Blooms with a view

In June, 11 villagers opened their gardens to the public for **Alvechurch Open Gardens**, part of the National Gardens Scheme, allowing the public to have a look round and gather inspiration from their gardens, all in aid of charity.

THOSE villagers with green fingers will likely have known about, or visited, Alvechurch Open Gardens over the weekend of 17–18 June.

Eleven homes across Alvechurch opened their gardens for visitors to explore and gather inspiration from, as part of the National Gardens Scheme.

Despite the threat of thunder over the weekend, it was hot and sunny (with the forecasted rain arriving right at the end of the event on Sunday), and visitors had a wonderful time garden-hopping.

One visitor said, while admiring a well-labelled garden, that the event was "a great combination of nosing around, and beautiful gardens".

Visitors, locally and some who had travelled a good distance to reach Alvechurch were able to look around the gardens on offer, with each displaying something different; including cottage gardens, wild gardens, long gardens with lots of levels and areas, and much more.

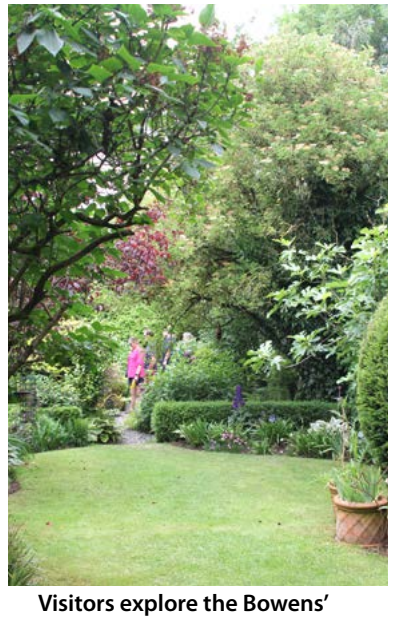
More than 700 visitors came to explore the Alvechurch gardens, and a total of £5308 was raised.

Most of the total was from ticket sales, however more than £1,000 was raised from cake and tea sales, organised and provided by the Baptist Church and two of the gardens on display; Mr and Mrs Bowen and Mike and Jean Collins.

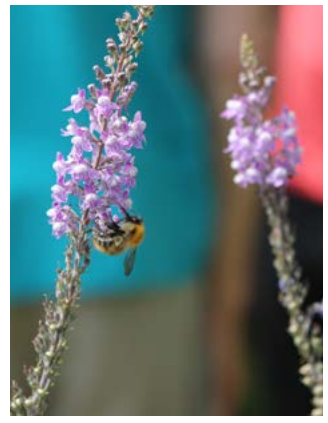
The money raised from the open gardens all goes to the National Garden Scheme, which supports a number of charities including Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie, and charities and organisations to do with gardens and health and support for gardeners.

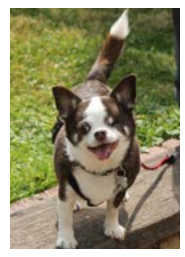
As far as the eye can see: Celia Hitch's beautifulgarden on Old Rectory Lane.

Chris and Stephanie Miall in one of the many beautiful spots in their garden.



Visitors explore the Bowens' gently sloping garden.





Clockwise from left: A wooden structure in Alvechurch allotments; a bee takes a break in one of the wild gardens; Martin and Janet Wright in their beautiful and well-labelled garden; one villager enjoys the serene canal at Wharfe Cottages; Ozzy the dog charms villagers while his parents have a break.

Celia Hitch with her young lodger Elodie.

Martin Wright shows off the growing escalonia.

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Chris Miall shows off the wall he built after taking a dry stone wall course.

Left: An eco-friendly garden on Birmingham Road.
Above from top: a blooming water lily in Kevin's cottage garden; roses of mystery origins on Snake Lane; two visitors admire the plants.
Right: Villagers queue up for tea and cakes; hosted by Jean and Mike Collins.

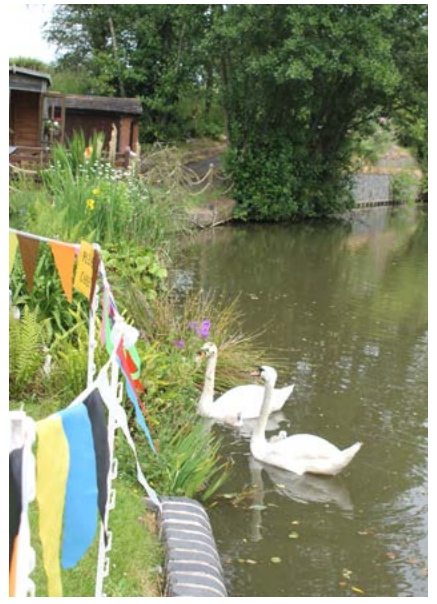
Roger Wardle and Sue Philips open their garden to visitors.

Kevin Baker in his traditional (and sunny yellow) garden.

Jason Turner and Paul Emery show off their modern, colourful rear garden.

A wild garden, complete with plenty of homes for bugs, owned by Janice Wiltshire.

A young visitor enjoys the space in Chris and Stephanie Mialls' garden.



Clockwise from top left: Pretty in pink in Celia Hitch's garden; delphiniums grow tall at the Mialls'; Jean and Mike Collins outside their very busy garden; Fiona Bowen, with daughter Hannah in their cottage garden; a bright blue cornflower; swans with their cygnets say hello to guests at Wharfe Cottages; Janette Poole shows off her beautiful canalside garden; guests enjoy the homemade cakes in the Collins' garden.

A beautifully lush pond, with calm water feature.

The Alvechurch Allotments show off a variety of planting beds.

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Village Gardening

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Above: A secret spot at the bottom of Martin and Janet Wright's garden, the perfect home for garden fairies. **Left:** A beautiful garden waterfall, one of the many water features in the garden of Celia Hitch.

A colourful cottage garden, owned by Kevin Baker.

WHAT'S ON GUIDE

CAFE BRIDGE RETURNS TO BARNT GREEN

WHAT ON EARTH IS CAFÉ BRIDGE?

Most people have heard of the card game of bridge but few are familiar with the more sociable form of the game.

The idea is that venues in a town or village agree to host the game for a few hands.

Then the players, after playing a few hands in each venue, move on to the next one and play a few more, making their way around all of the venues.

Because the venues are all cafes or pubs, players are able to purchase a variety of refreshments in any of the venues and, most importantly, they will have lunch in the venue that they happen to be in at lunchtime.

Following a break during lockdown, Café Bridge, organised by Bromsgrove Bridge Club, is returning to Barnt Green.

On 9 October, sessions will be taking place in Barnt Green, at The Garrity, Café Morso, the Victoria pub and the Barnt Green Inn.

If you're a regular or visiting one of these pubs and cafes, look out for tables of players and, if you're interested, and would like to find out more, just ask them.

Café Bridge events also have other social benefits, and raise money for charities while playing.

A number of the businesses in Barnt Green are sponsoring prizes for a raffle and this year, the proceeds of the raffle and money raised from the event itself will be going to the Blue Cross Rehoming Centre in Catshill.

Bromsgrove Bridge Club invites you to come along and just have a drink and watch if you're interested - and perhaps buy a few raffle tickets.

In 2019, before the hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Cafe Bridge fundraising event raised more than £1,000 for Acorn's Children's Hospice (above) and attracted players from all over Worcestershire.

Keith Collins, Chairman of Bromsgrove Bridge Club said "The social side of bridge has always been important and is even more so now we've come out of Covid.

"This is a chance for players to experience the venues in the village, and hopefully return in the future, and the generous support from the local businesses helps to ensure the success of the event.

"Of course, being able to donate the proceeds to a truly local charity makes the event so much more worthwhile for local people.

"We hope that even non-players will just come along and watch if they're interested – and perhaps buy a few raffle tickets."

If you would like further information about watching or joining the club, please contact Keith at kbridgecollins@aol.com.

MUSIC

THE MIDLAND SINFONIA's final concert of the current season 'FRENCH FANCIES' an evening of French musical treats will be held at 7.30pm on Saturday 22nd July at St Laurence Church, Alvechurch B48 7SB. The programme conducted by guest DEXTER DROWN, will include Ravel's Bolero, Faure's Requiem and is part of Bromsgrove Festival.
TMS will be joined by local chamber choir Oakville singers, soprano soloist Isabelle Palmer and baritone soloist Charlie Baigent for the Faure Requiem.
Tickets: £13 (£3 students and under16)are available online at midlandsinfonia.co.uk or from Gin & Pickles and The Lounge in the Square, Alvechurch. Also, if available, on the door £14 (£3) card or cash. Doors and bar open at 7pm. www.midlandsinfonia.co.uk

ALVECHURCH COMMUNITY CHOIR usually meets in Alvechurch Village Hall on Mondays at 7.30PM with occasional pub and outdoor sessions and a live stream. The choir is inclusive and open to everyone, whether you think you can sing or not. For more information or to join or book, see their website www.alvechurchcommunitychoir.org.uk.
The choir takes some time off in summer but are meeting on 17 and 31 July and 14 August. The 14 August session is a pub session and free to anyone. They are performing at the Light up Redditch and Bromsgrove event in Redditch on 5 August. Their autumn session starts on 4 September.

BEOLEY VILLAGE HALL hosts live music, comedy, cinema and jazz nights.
Upcoming jazz nights will feature The Potato Head Jazz Band, from Spain on 26 July and The Pedigree Jazz Band on 27 September.
On 14 July, The Buzzin' Hornets (Swampy Blues and Rock 'n' Roll will perform live, followed by Keith Slater (folk, country, pop, Sinatra etc.) on 18 August.
There will be a Village Cinema event on 1 September, the film will be advised closer to the time.
On Wednesday Jazz nights the bar opens at 7.45pm, with entertainment from 8.15pm.
For Friday night events, the bar opens at 7pm with entertainment from 7.30pm, and on Saturdays the bar opens at 7.15pm with entertainment from 8pm.
For more information and details, contact Paul on 07973 759340 or Richard 01527 66646. The programme is subject to change if the circumstances dictate.

THE ASKLEPIOS ORCHESTRA will host their Autumn Concert in St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green, B45 8NR on 10 December 2023.

BEL CANTO SINGERS, the well-known 4-part Worcestershire choir, are back to rehearsals at St. John's Church, Greenlands Avenue Redditch B98 7PZ on Monday evenings. They are always happy to welcome new singers. They have a very wide and varied repertoire and a huge catalogue to include pop, fun pieces, musical theatre, jazz, folk music and traditional choral and classical music along with much more. Bel Canto Singers are a friendly and social group, under the guidance of Musical Director, Liz Green and accompanist, Wendy Quirk. They are a non-profit making organisation and select a new charity each year to support both financially and with provision of their services. Just turn up at rehearsal on Mondays at 7.30pm where there will be a wide range of singing activities, light refreshments and chat. More information please contact Secretary Veronica Porter 07885 507899 or visit www.belcantosingers.org.uk

THE GEMINI Choir is seeking new singers. Info from Philip Morris on 07969 741137.

BLACKWELL Concert Band and Training Band is open to all brass and woodwind players of all abilities. To learn more about the band, book them, or find details of upcoming events, email blackwellconcertband98@gmail.com or visit www.blackwellconcertband.co.uk

SINGING For Health is a group aimed specifically at people with health problems, mental or physical. Face to face groups have now resumed, meeting on Wednesdays 2-3pm at Longbridge Retirement Village and Thursdays 2-3pm at St Chad's Church, Rubery (£3 per session). Everyone is welcome!

BROMSGROVE Music Centre runs weekly sessions for young brass, wind, and string instrument players to enjoy being part of a group who rehearse and perform together. New members always welcome! Sessions are run by Severn Arts at St John's Middle School, Bromsgrove, on Mondays 5.45–6.45pm. Individual instrumental and vocal lessons are also provided at the centre. For more info, see www.severnarts.org.uk/music-centre-groups

BROMSGROVE Folk Club meets on the second and last Thurs every month at Catshill Club, starting at 8pm. For a full list of events call Bob Bignell on 0121 476 5938 or see www.bromsgrovefolkclub.co.uk

BROMSGROVE Rock Choir offers everyone the chance to sing pop, rock and chart songs – no audition needed. Free taster sessions available. More info at www.rockchoir.com or on 01252 714276.

BROMSGROVE Community Choir meets on Thurs evenings, 6–7 pm at Bromsgrove Methodist Church (main church hall). They sing for fun and enjoyment; everyone welcome, singers or not. Contact Ruth Henley for details on 01527 527022 or 07812 145267, or email r.g.henley@btinternet.com

DANCING

TANGO ARGENTINO at Barnt Green Quakers/Friends Meeting House on Saturday mornings and Thursday evenings. For further information: www.facebook.com/groups/tango42/announcements (no Facebook account needed).

AELFGYTHE Border Morris is seeking new dancers (female) and musicians (male or female) to join them for fun, exercise and dancing. They meet at 7.45pm every Weds in Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall. Everyone welcome. Come and play traditional folk music, or try Morris dancing. For more details call Pam on 07961 830 831.

FRENCH & Breton folk dancing meets at Alvechurch Village Hall on the first Sat each month from 2.30–5pm (Covid-dependent, so please check first by emailing alvechurch-frenchdance@gmail.com). Informal tuition and live music provided. New dancers (and musicians) welcome. £2 per session.

SEQUENCE Ballroom and Latin dancing every Mon evening at 8pm at the Longbridge Social Club, 1012 Bristol Road South, Northfield. Occasional free tuition. All welcome to a friendly fun-filled dance. Details from Kalvin on 07725 265024.

ALVECHURCH Morris Men are on the lookout for new dancers and musicians. They practise on Mondays at Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall, 8.30–10pm, followed by a "debrief" at a local hostelry. They dance in local towns and at various local and national events, and perform a world-famous (sort of) mummers play in the village every New Year's Day. No ability, fitness or co-ordination required – if you are male, 18+ and prepared to spend more time than is probably good for you in public houses, pop along to meet the group! Drop in to any practice, contact Steve on 07375 592928 or email: alvechurchbagman@gmail.com

NANCY Butterfly Morris Dancers dance in the North-West Morris style (clogs!) and practise at Catshill Methodist Church Hall on Monday evenings ready to meet up with other Morris sides for social events and festivals. They are very happy to welcome new adult dancers and musicians. See: www.nancybutterfly.co.uk or Facebook for what they get up to. You can contact them via the website or Jane on 07726 915289.

AVONCROFT Folk Dance Group enjoys anything from barn dances to ones seen in *Pride & Prejudice* or *Poldark*. All welcome, no need to have a partner. The group meets every Thurs from 8–10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre, Redditch Road, Bromsgrove B60 4JR. £2.50 incl refreshments. Info from Liz Stanton on 01905 353995 or liz@the-stantons.uk or visit www.avoncroftfdg.weebly.com

BJ's BUSY Boots Line Dancing Classes: Tues 2–3pm Bromsgrove Leisure Centre; 7–10pm Stoke Prior Sports/Country Club. Thurs 1.15–3.30pm Bromsgrove Methodist Church Centre. Social Dance usually 1st Sat in month at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane. It's a fun way to exercise. For more details phone Brenda on 01527 870151.

AMY GREAVES SCHOOL OF DANCE & Fitness offers a variety of classes for toddler up to adults. Based in Hopwood, Bournville and Longbridge. Contact 07979408997 amygreaves1@hotmail.co.uk www.amygreavesschoolofdance.com

SEQUENCE dancing every Tuesday evening at 8pm at Fairfield Village Hall, Bromsgrove. Welcoming and friendly atmosphere, all levels welcome. For further details please contact Joyce & Len on 0121 682 3266.

DANCE AND FITNESS at Bournheath Village Hall including Adult Zumba, Pilates and Stretch classes as well as KS1 and Baby Ballet. For more information message 'Dance With Nikki' on social media or n.foulkes@hotmail.co.uk

BALLROOM/LATIN SEQUENCE dance some line dance held on the first Friday of the month (check just in case Friday has to change because of commitments in the village) from 8pm -10.30pm at Extracare Longbridge Village, B31 2FZ. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

LINEDANCE CLASS, every Thursday between 6pm - 7pm at Extracare Longbridge Village. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

BEGINNERS LINEDANCE class, Tuesdays 6pm - 7pm at West Heath Community Centre, Hamstead House, B31 3QY. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

CLUBS, GROUPS & SOCIETIES

ST GODWALD'S Community Cafe meets every other Fri from 10am–noon at St Godwald's Room adjacent to the Church Hall, Finstall Road, Bromsgrove. Extra safety measures are in place. Friendship, cake, tea/coffee. Donations welcome— monies to St Basil's charity for homeless youngsters. More info: davidrowe876@btinternet.com

BROMSGROVE Men In Sheds is a group for anyone (male or female) who has retired or been made redundant and wants to spend time with like-minded people. The group meets Mon–Thurs, 10am–2pm at Unit 1, Metals & Ores Industrial Estate, Stoke Prior B60 4JZ. You can find more information by calling 01527 570490 or email enquiries@ageukbrwf.org.uk

BARNT GREEN QUAKERS warmly invite everyone to the Friends Meeting House on Sandhills Road. Parking is available on site, and there is access for the disabled. We hope you will visit us to meet old and new friends for a chat and a (free!) cup of tea or coffee. It does us all good just to get out of our homes for a short time now and then. The Meeting House is a pleasant, quiet and comfortable place where you can meet other people. They will be hosting free film screenings on the third Fridays of the month. The next one, will be on 15 September at 7pm, A celebrated Western about a Quaker Newly-wed has to face criminals arriving on the 12.00 midday train who plant to kill her Sheriff Husband…

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Followed by "Romeo and Juliet" Shakespeare's greatest love story as told by a master Italian filmmaker. It is the most beatifull screen version with a controversial love scene on 20 October at 7pm.

PLACES OF WELCOME is a growing network of local community groups who provide their neighbourhoods with places where all people can feel safe and where they can connect, belong and contribute. You can now find one of these hubs in Alvechurch. The network is open in St Laurence Church and The Ark on Wednesdays 10.30am-12pm, however you may find these in many different places such as community centres or libraries, and all are open to everyone and offer friendship and hospitality, free refreshments and local knowledge about the neighbourhood. Visit www.placesofwelcome.org.uk or email info@placesofwelcome.org.uk

REDDITCH Military History Society usually meets monthly in St Luke's Church Hall (Evesham Road, Redditch, B97 4JX), 7 for 7.30pm. More info from Ron on 01527 545450 or ronnieg33b@hotmail.co.uk

FRIENDS Of Bittell Reservoirs is a group of local people interested in preserving the natural environment of the Site of Special Scientific Interest at Upper Bittell, Lower Bittell and Mill Shrub reservoirs, which are important staging posts for migrant birds and wildlife. If you have an interest in preserving this unique environment and would like to help in its preservation and maintenance, contact: Charles Deverill on cdjd26@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY runs a regular programme of social events and guided walks, as well as maintaining local footpaths. Talks and social events are held in the Village Hall. Entry is £1 for members and £2 for guests, including a drink and biscuit. AVS is always pleased to welcome new members—contact Martin on 07742 100007 or martin-clarke1@btinternet.com.

REDDITCH Community Shed is a project that encourages skills, combats loneliness, and provides a sense of worth in people who are retired or otherwise wondering what to do with themselves. They have a small woodworking work shop in the Kingfisher Centre just outside Primark and they are open Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Call in for tea and biscuits and a look round. More details at www.RedditchCommunityShed.co.uk or on FaceBook. If you're in Redditch of a Tuesday or Thursday they would be very pleased to see you.

THE MONDAY Fellowship group meets at the Parish Centre behind St Andrew's Church in Barnt Green at 2.30pm on the second Monday every month; £2 to include tea and biscuits and an interesting talk. Info: Maureen Frowley on 0121 445 0880.

INNER WHEEL Club of Redditch welcomes you to its monthly meetings on 2nd Tuesday of the month at the Southcrest Hotel Redditch. An international Women's Organisation, they enjoy a bit of everything; walks, talks, days & evenings out, and everything in between whilst at the same time helping the community. Contact Anne Robertson for information 07580351361. Or email redditch.innerwheel@gmail.com or visit www.innerwheel.co.uk

BROMSGROVE U3A: No longer in full time work? Activity/interest groups and speaker meetings are happening throughout the month. Check website for details: www.u3asites.org.uk/bromsgrove/home

BROMSGROVE & Redditch Welcomes Refugees is a group of volunteers supporting local refugees who arrived under the government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Relocation Scheme (SVPRS). New volunteers always needed – training and support given. BRWR is open to all, irrespective of political or religious belief. Full details at www.brwr.uk

CATSHILL Carers and Bereavement Back Up Group is a group set up specifically to offer respite, socialising and occasional speakers to carers and bereaved in the area. It meets on the last Tues each month in the coffee bar area of Catshill Methodist Church Centre in Golden Cross Lane from 2.30pm for about 1.5hrs. All carers and bereaved welcome, as well as those who used to care for someone who has passed away or is now in a care facility. Tea and biscuits/cake provided – no charge. Contact Sheila (0121 445 2813) or Di (0121 445 3595) for details and encouragement.

BROMSGROVE Speakers Club meets at The Barn at The Bell at Belbroughton every other Tues, 7.45–10pm. Everyone who wants to gain confidence in public speaking is welcome, but you must book in advance via www.bromsgrovespeakers.org.uk, which also contains full details of events.

RE-ENGAGE (formerly Contact the Elderly) aims to help isolated elderly people by offering monthly tea parties where they can reconnect or make new friends in their own community. If you know of an elderly person who could benefit, please get in touch on 07539 276054. Guests need to be aged over 75 and living alone, and must be mobile enough to walk to a driver's car with assistance. Find info at www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk or on Facebook @ContacttheElderlyRedditch

AGE UK Herefordshire and Worcestershire have a free Dementia Café at Finstall Village hall. It is a free social hub aimed at people with dementia, their families, and carers in Bromsgrove and the surrounding areas. It takes place every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 10.30am-12.30pm.

BROMSGROVE Photographic Society is a friendly, active and mutually supportive club for those keen to learn about, or improve, their photographic and digital imaging skills. The growing membership has skills ranging from novice to highly skilled, within wide-ranging subjects. The club meets on Tues nights, 8-10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre. For more info, visit www.bromsgroveps.com or see Facebook and Twitter.

ROTARY Club of Bromsgrove meets every 2nd Tues of the month at Maekong Thai Restaurant, and every 4th Tues at Bromsgrove School, both 7pm for 7.30pm. New members welcome. For more info visit www.bromsgroverotary.org.uk or contact Ron Pearce on 07703 567982.

HEART Of England Speakers is a friendly public speaking club, based in Solihull. It is affiliated to Toastmasters International, and meets on the 1st and 3rd Tues of each month, 7.30—9.30pm, at the Silhillians Sports Club and Events Centre. If you would like to boost your confidence get in touch via www.heart-speakers.org.uk, Instagram @toastmasters-heartofengland, or via LinkedIn.

REDDITCH Rotary Club meets Monday lunchtimes at the Abbey Hotel, Hither Green Lane, Redditch, B98 9BE. You would be very welcome to join in. Want to be involved, hear interesting speakers, and serve your community? Want to know more? Contact Peter Williams on 01527 60277.

LICKEY PHAB Club is a social club where people aged 14 and over, with and without disabilities, can come together each week to have fun! It is affiliated to national charity Phab. The club meets every Mon from 7.30–9.30pm at The Trinity Centre, Lickey Parish Hall to have fun, play games, do crafts or just chat – there's also a tuck shop! More info from Louise Boother on 07814 122990 or lickeyphabclub@hotmail.com

BEACON Ladies Club meets at 8pm on alternate Weds evenings at The Hawthorns Social Club, Rednal Hill Lane, Rednal. There is a varied programme of speakers and outings, including occasional visits to the theatre. New members of all ages welcome. £12 annual membership, plus £2 fortnightly. Call Barbara on 0121 445 3456 or Anita on 445 3770.

BARNT GREEN FRIENDSHIP CLUB meets every 3rd Tues of the month at 2.15pm at the Friends Meeting House, Barnt Green. Visitors £3 to include tea and biscuits. Members 50p. Ladies and gents both welcome. For more details call Rosalind on 0121 445 0598.

THE WORCESTER-BIRMINGHAM & DROITWICH CANALS SOCIETY holds regular monthly meetings in the meeting room behind The Weighbridge Pub, Scarfield Hill, Alvechurch on the first Tuesday of the month. There is usually a guest speaker. They promote the upkeep of the canals to ensure that the heritage is looked after for all to enjoy and are a registered charity. Find out more: www.wbdcs.org.uk or look on Facebook @wbdcs.org.uk. Please email contact@wbdcs.org.uk for further information. Meetings start at 7.45pm. Non-members are always welcome. Free entry.

ALVECHURCH WEDNESDAY CLUB usually meets on the second Weds each month, and offers the chance to make new friends, meet old ones and enjoy talks, demos and visits. In August they are having their annual "Afternoon Tea at Janet's" but this will be held on the 16th August, the 3rd Wednesday in August not the 2nd Wednesday! Info from Janet on 0121 447 7870 or Lis on 0121 445 3895.

COFFEE, Cake and Chat is a place to meet new friends or catch up with old friends (includes a dedicated baby area) on the 4th Friday of each month 10:30am - 12noon at The Wheel, Blackwell. No charge, donations welcome. More info on 0121 445 1425.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY BRIDGE, AND MEET NEW PEOPLE?

IF the answer is "yes", then do attend a taster session at Barnt Green Bridge Club. They are a well-established, friendly club who meet each Wednesday afternoon throughout the year at St Andrew's Church Hall to play bridge in a welcoming environment.

The only criteria is that you already have some experience of playing bridge.

They are keen to attract new members and you can use this opportunity to try the club before committing. If this appeals to you, don't delay – call John Waller (0121 445 1168) or Olivia Goodborn (07583 484065) who will be delighted to hear from you and to provide more details.

BROMSGROVE (1982) PROBUS Club provides regular opportunities for retired professionals and businessmen to meet socially and share common interests. A members' meeting is held at Avoncroft Arts Centre on the 3rd Weds each month, 10am–12noon, including refreshments and a talk by a guest speaker. For more info visit www.bromsgroveprobus.co.uk or contact Jim on 01527 833531 bromsgrove1982probus.weebley.com

KINGFISHER PROBUS Club of Redditch is recruiting retired and semi-retired men to join them in a friendly environment. They meet every 2nd Thurs of the month at 11.30am at the Court Leet,174 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove B61 7AY, with a short meeting at noon then lunch followed by an interesting talk given by a visiting speaker. Partners/friends welcome to join for walks, trips, golf, skittles and special lunches. Contact Chris Bailey on 01527 835802 for confirmation of date and venue. More info at www.kingfisherprobusredditch.co.uk

LICKEY Hills Local History Society meets monthly at 7.30pm in the Trinity Centre, Old Birmingham Road, Lickey B45 8ES. Annual subscription £15. Non-members £3 per meeting. For more information please email: info@lhlhs.org.uk or visit: www.lhlhs.org.uk

BROMSGROVE & Redditch Soroptimists meets every 2nd Thurs of the month at Burcot Village Hall. New members welcome – pop to a meeting, email sibrsoroptimist@gmail.com or ring 07812 985927.

ALVECHURCH Historical Society has a planned programme of talks on the first Monday of the month at 7.45pm at The Ark, St Laurence Church, Alvechurch. More details from Anne Humphries on 0121 445 5955. New members welcome.

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Community Meeting Room Hire Available

ENQUIRE TODAY FOR MORE INFORMATION

BARNT GREEN QUAKER MEETING HOUSE
6 SANDHILLS ROAD
BARNT GREEN
B45 8NR

BARNTGREENMH@THEPRIORYROOMS.CO.UK

0121-236-2317

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BROMSGROVE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at Bromsgrove Rugby Club. Doors open 7.30pm, speakers begin 7.45pm. Admission free on your first visit; refreshments available. Observing meetings are also held on the first Monday each month – bring your telescopes. More info via www.broms-astro.org.uk, www.facebook.com/bromsastro or emailing info@broms-astro.org.uk

ROTARY CLUB of Lickey Hills meets on Monday evenings, 7.15 for 7.30pm, at Hillscourt Conference Centre (NASUWT headquarters) on Rose Hill (B45 8RS). For details contact Graham Wiseman on 0121 460 1402.

SILVER THREADS, the Alvechurch club, meets on the first Weds each month at 2pm in Alvechurch Village Hall. You'll be sure of a welcome in this friendly atmosphere, where members can chat over a cup of tea. There are regular bingo sessions, and occasional days out. New members welcome. More info from Pat on 0121 447 8630.

WOODRUSH RUGBY Club "Old Dogs" meet at 8pm on the 2nd Thurs in the month at the Clubhouse, Icknield Street, 01564 822878. Open to all former players, social members and old friends for a social chat and the odd reminisce over a glass of beer. Join us: call Mike Betts on 07960 303254 or visit www.woodrushrfc.co.uk or info@woodrushrfc.co.uk

THE MACULAR Society Barnt Green Support Group meets on the last Fri of the month (with some exceptions) at The Parish Centre, behind St Andrew's Church, Sandhills Road, Barnt Green, B45 8NR, 2–4pm. Friendly, self-help group, proving there is more to life than this devastating eye condition. New members always welcome. For more info, ring Wendy on 0121 445 1585 or Alan on 01527 877864.

COMMUNITY COFFEE morning - open to all. Free refreshments and chat. Wednesdays 10-12 at Barnt Green Baptist Church. Enquiries can be made to: events@bgb.org.uk

The North Worcestershire Association of the NATIONAL TRUST hold monthly meetings with interesting speakers on 3rd Thursday 7.30pm at Tardebigge Community Hall B60 3AH, also walks, outings and an annual holiday. For further info email Ros257@yahoo.co.uk

SPORT, FITNESS & HEALTH

UPTON WARREN SAILING CLUB sails throughout the year at Aztec (Upton Warren) opposite Webb's Garden Centre, Wychbold. A small, friendly club with both mixed fleet racing and cruising sessions. Most members sail their own boats but there are also club boats available for members to use. See www.uwsc.co.uk to find out more or contact membership@uwsc.co.uk

JOOLISM HIIT CLASSES. Semi-PT resistance training for ladies only in a well-equipped gym in Bromsgrove. For ladies who want toned and strong bodies. Attendance must be pre-booked via julie@joolismfitness.co.uk

WOODRUSH RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB, Icknield Street, Alvechurch, B38 0EL is recruiting: Senior (Men & Ladies) U17 Colts Mini/Junior & Micros. Call 07341 256821 for recruitment or 01564 822878 (Clubhouse) email info@woodushrfc.co.uk or see: www.drushrfc.co.uk Facebook @WoodrushRFC

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY'S WALKS are held at 2pm of the first Sunday of the month unless noted otherwise. For walks starting outside the village, contact the walk leader if you need a lift. Occasionally, weather conditions mean that a walk must be cancelled at late notice: check with the leaders or the AVS website if unsure. Always wear appropriate footwear. Contact walks organiser Tony Brannon for more information about the walks: avswalks@gmail.com

BARNT GREEN FISHING CLUB controls the fishing (both game and coarse) on the Bittell Reservoirs. Interested parties - contact: bgfcmembership@outlook.com or Facebook @ Barnt Green Fishing Club.

REDDITCH & Bromsgrove Company of Archers meet April–Sept, Mon 6.30pm and Fri 6.30pm at Meadow Park Football Ground (by Harris Brush Works – outdoors) and Oct–March on Fri 6.30pm at Studley Leisure Centre (indoors). Really friendly no-pressure club. New members always welcome (juniors from 8 years old, seniors from 18 to 80+, seasoned archers or absolute beginners). Beginners' courses run throughout the year or taster sessions by appointment. Further info from rbcoaCoach@gmail.com, rbcoasecretary@gmail.com, or www.redditcharchers.org

REDDITCH Ramblers is a growing, friendly and sociable group offering a full walks programme including walks every Sat and Sun and a midweek walk most weeks. Sun walk is usually 6–9 miles; the Sat walk is more challenging, usually 10–12 miles. Midweek walks vary, sometimes morning walks followed by option of lunch or full day walking. The Saturday Strollers walk fortnightly (4–5 miles). Newcomers are always welcome and can walk three times with the group before deciding if they want to join. The group also arranges holidays, coach trips and social events throughout the year. Full info at redditch.ramblers@gmail.com or www.redditchramblers.org.uk

PHYSIOTHERAPY-LED Pilates Classes in Cofton Hackett, Barnt Green and Lickey Hills. Mixed ability Daytime and Evening classes available. Mother & Baby classes also run by Women's Health Physiotherapists. Small and welcoming classes aimed to improve balance, muscle tone and posture as well as overall body strength. Contact Elizabeth on 07850 604425 or elizabethalexanderltd@gmail.com or see www.elizabethalexanderphysiotherapy.com

CLUBBERCISE@ Alvechurch: Get sweat and glow! Get ready for exercise in disguise. You'll be dancing yourself happy and sweating until you sparkle, without even realising it. Mondays 7.30–8.30pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

POUND FITNESS@ Alvechurch: Channel your inner rockstar with this full body cardio-jam session. Using Ripstix®, lightly-weighted drumsticks engineered specifically for exercising, POUND transforms drumming into an incredibly effective way of working out. Weds 7.30–8.15pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

RELAXATION & MEDITATION for Everyone. Short, welcoming & inclusive classes with an experienced teacher at The Ark, Alvechurch, and online. An experiential approach to relaxation and meditation for a calm, clear mind and relaxed, balanced outlook. For more information, contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903 663085.

BARNT GREEN Sailing Club offers regular sailing, either racing or casual sailing, in beautiful surroundings at Upper Bittell reservoir. For info contact secretary@bgsc.uk or see www.sailingbarntgreen.com

BRIAR Rose Field Archers is a field archery club based near Bromsgrove. There are two qualified coaches for those interested in taking up the sport. For information contact briarrosefieldarchers@gmail.com

YOGA Really Works: classes on Thurs evenings (term-time only), 7–8pm at Cotteridge Quaker Meeting House, Watford Road. Six-week blocks £45. Slow and mindful rhythmic movement in time with the breath. Accessible venue— classes open to wheelchair uses and less abled persons. Contact George on 07490 781637 or yogareallyworks@outlook.com, see www.yogareallyworks.co.uk or on Facebook @Yogareallyworks

THE RAMBLERS Bromsgrove Group: Guided walking with our group for pleasure, fitness and fun. Full programme of walks / events throughout the year. More info at www.bromsgroveramblers.webs.com or call Martin on 01527 857117 or Peter on 01527 558203.

ALVECHURCH WALKING Buddies: join a regular local walk with like-minded people who simply want to go on a local, sedate and friendly walk with no pressure. Well-behaved owners and their dogs are very welcome. The group meets at 10.30am every Thurs. For more info, search for 'alvwb' on Facebook or contact Tony on 07763 468893.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL run a series of weekly health walks around Bromsgrove and its districts. The walks are usually steady in pace and led by qualified walk leaders, and free to attend. Where it exists, walks are often followed by guided sessions on the park gym equipment. Blackwell Gentle Walk, Wednesdays, 10.30am, start opposite the entrance to St. Catherine's Church.
Lickey End Walking for Health, Tuesdays, 10am, meet at Lickey End Recreation Ground car park.
Oakalls and Harwood Park Health Walk, Wednesdays, 2pm, meet at The Oakalls Play Area.
Sanders Park Walk, Mondays, 9.50am for 10am start, meet at the café kiosk near the car park. There are three options: Short (30mins), Medium (2-3miles in 60-75mins), and Fast (3+ miles in 60mins).
Bromsgrove Rural Walk, Fridays, 9.45am for 10am departure, meet in the Sanders Park car park extension. These rural walks vary between 4 and 7 miles and can involve driving, a system of car sharing has been established.
Stoke Heath Health Walks, Thursdays, 10.30am, meet at Stoke Heath Recreation Ground.
Wythall Health Walk, Wednesday, 2pm, meet at Wythall car park B47 6LZ.

SOCIAL TENNIS takes place at Rubery Community & Leisure Centre, Holywell Lane, Rubery B45 9AD on Mondays from 1–3pm. The group would welcome a few more players – just turn up or ring Don on 01527 759 318.

SARACEN Cycling Club is seeking new members. Men, ladies, beginners, and regular riders are all welcome. The long-established club meets regularly by the Tardebigge Pub on Thurs at 10am and Sun at 9.45am. See www.saracenroadclub.com or call Ivor on 0121 453 2287.

LONGBRIDGE Cycling Club meets weekly on Tues and either Sat or Sun. Ride pace generally at 9-11mph overall average, varied distances. Hotel and hostel weekends away, cycle camping adventures, social outings and much more. All ages, beginners, and seasoned cyclists all welcome. Call or text Deb on 07738 982161, email debweston@aol.com or see www.longbridgecyclingclub.com or Facebook @longbridgecyclingclub

MERCIAN NORDIC WALKING: come and try a taster session for fun, fitness and friendship. More info at www.merciannordicwalking.co.uk Online fitness and personal training available at www.mercianfitness.co.uk

PILATES Mat classes and 1:1 (apparatus). Irrespective of age, lifestyle, health and ability, we could all benefit from listening to our bodies: tuning in to our needs, building connections throughout the body, focusing on detail; challenging what is strong, building what is weaker, balancing the body to move away from pain and discomfort towards greater resilience and independence. Book a 1:1 apparatus session (Barnt Green) or a mat class (Rowney Green). Call 07759 590830 or see www.steffaffleck.co.uk

BIODIVERSITY WALKS

MARY GREEN'S next walk to look at biodiverse habitat round Alvechurch is on Tuesday 1 August, repeated on Wednesday 2 August. Meet on either day at 10.30am at Alvechurch station – no need to book.

The walk takes about two hours and is gentle and slow, though it may be on rough ground. For more information contact alvbiodiv@gmail.com

BARNT Green Sports Club (Margesson Drive, Barnt Green, B45 8LR) offers racquet sports in a friendly environment, plus running and cycling groups. Clubhouse with licensed bar. More info from Nick Butcher on 0121 445 1978 or visit www.barntgreensportsclub.co.uk

CATSHILL FC offers youth coaching sessions each Saturday morning at Catshill Middle School, Meadow Road, Catshill, B61 0JW. Boys and girls from Reception age upwards are welcome. Contact Gary on 07462 118920 or see www.catshillfc.co.uk for further info.

BROMSGROVE & REDDITCH Badminton Club welcomes players for social and league play. Playing Sunday evenings 5.40 to 7.40pm. Details from Steve Whittaker 07805 051456.

PILATES with Lottie Newberry: Physiotherapy-led Pilates classes every Monday in Alvechurch in the day and Barnt Green in the evening. Contact Lottie on lottienewberrypilates@hotmail.com. All abilities welcome.

COMMUNITY Exercise Classes at Alvechurch Baptist Church, run by Bromsgrove council: Active Seniors on Tues 9.30–10.30am. and Zumba Gold on Thurs 1–2pm (each £3.50 per session). Fully-qualified, insured instructors on hand to help. For more info, call 01527 881289 or visit at www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/things-to-do/active-bromsgrove

YOGA for Every-Body. Friendly & Inclusive classes in Blackwell, Alvechurch and online with an experienced teacher. A slow but powerful approach to yoga, which encourages free, natural alignment of the body, whilst building strength, flexibility and relaxed awareness. Contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903663085.

TAI CHI (Qigong) sessions in Alvechurch Village Hall on Mon 10–11am and Friday 10.30. Qigong is an integration of physical postures, breathing techniques, and focused intentions. More details Nige on 07966069956 or nige@mindfulmoves.co.uk

FIVE WAYS Old Edwardians' Cricket Club at Ash Lane, Hopwood: Junior, Men's and Women's teams, come and join in! Open to all. Excellent facilities. Everyone welcome. Coaching for juniors on Fri evenings May to Aug. Contact Mark Tovey on 01527 835031.

NEW Ravens (North East Worcestershire Ravens Rugby League Club) is now based at Forshaw Heath Lane, Portway, B94 5LH. Junior training and 'little leaguers' take place on Sun mornings from 10.30am, with open-age and touch on Weds evenings from 7pm. All welcome at this family-orientated club. Contact Gail on 07515 020844 or Jason on 07957 248464 visit www.newravens.net

KINGS Norton Rhinos offers contact and non-contact rugby for children from Reception to Year 12. A safe and friendly introduction to rugby – and plenty of outdoor fun and exercise! Training takes place at KNRFC Ash Lane, Hopwood, on Sundays from 9.30–11.30am. Contact Simon Thompson on 07968 424585 or visit www.knrfc.co.uk

HOPWOOD Ladies Cycling Club meets at Hopwood Playing Field on Tuesdays at 11.30am and Wednesdays at 9.30am. For information, visit www.hopwoodladiescyclingclub.co.uk or phone Sheila Evans on 07779 530017.

MARTIAL ARTS Kickboxing/Karate at The Ark Tuesdays 6.30-7.30. For more information please visit www.forcecombatmartialarts.co.uk

SLIMMING WORLD at Cofton Village Hall, on Wednesdays 9:30am, 5:30pm and 7:30pm.

ASSERTIVENESS AND HELPING SKILLS DONINGTON TRAINING runs classes at Alvechurch Village Hall. Easy, enjoyable and effective learning. Wednesdays from 19th January, pay what you think and can afford, any profits go to The Village Hall. For info: http://tinyurl.com/DTcdates or John Talbut (0121) 445 4607.

MEDITATION & MINDFULNESS sessions to help you relax, find your inner peace, and elevate your life every Wednesday evening 7pm-9.15pm at the Friends Meeting House, Barnt Green. Suitable for everyone. Please contact Coz for more info & to book on 07770067349, you can find us on Facebook – MeditationWithCoz, or online, visit: www.meditationwithcoz.com

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

BABY Bounce & Rhyme is at Alvechurch Library Mondays 10–10.30am. Sing-a-long to traditional nursery rhymes and action songs.

STORYTIME at Alvechurch Library is on Tuesdays 11–11.30. Silly stories and tall tales for pre-school children to enjoy with parents and carers.

DRAMA TOTS: Award-winning imaginary play classes for children 8 months to 5 years. Classes run term-time on Monday mornings in Alvechurch/Thursdays in Finstall (other days/venues available). Contact Jo 07738 969460 for details.

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TINY CHURCH (stay and play for under-5s and their carer) meets in Holy Trinity Church, Lickey, each Weds from 11.15am–12.30pm during term times. Games, toys, snacks and stories, and a time to meet together with God. Just pop along, ring 0121 445 1425 or email clive.rushton@btinternet.com

EVERY SCOUT GROUP in Bromsgrove (which includes Barnt Green, Blackwell, Catshill, Finstall and Lickey as well as the town centre) currently has girls and boys aged 6-18 waiting to join, their numbers restricted by the ratio of adults to young people. A few more adults helping would enable existing leaders to open more Beaver, Cub, Scout and Explorer units allowing more young people to experience Scouting and learn skills for life. If you could spare a few hours each month please contact us on 07539 031740 or visit scoutshw.org.uk

THE NATIONAL CHILDBIRTH TRUST (NCT) runs ever-popular antenatal and post-natal courses to grow your knowledge and your network, allowing you to feel prepared and confident moving into the next chapter of your life. Discover and learn with other local parents-to-be, make vital connections and life-long friends in your community. Courses are held at St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green. Visit www.nct.org.uk/courses-workshops or call 0300 330 0700.

SOLIHULL BABY MASSAGE is at Rowney Green Village Hall on Tuesday's. A relaxed environment for parents and babies to bond through massage. Visit www.solihullbabymassage.co.uk

RHYTHM TIME is a fun, award-winning developmental music classes for the under 5's. Classes in Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Bromsgrove, Redditch and lots more. Contact Vicky 07712 675 697 or visit www.rhythmtime.net

NEW ROAD PARENTS SUPPORT for parents of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans children meets monthly in Bromsgrove. A confidential, voluntary, small support group for parents by parents. Close links with FFLAG. Visit www.newroadparents.org, email newroadparents@gmail.com or get in touch via Facebook @New Road Parents Lgbtqi+ Support Group.

THEATRETRAIN Bromsgrove, performing arts for children 4-18yrs. Saturdays 10.30am-1.30pm. For a half-price trial email bromsgrove@theatretrain.co.uk or call 07766 724834.

TUTORING both online and in-person for Maths KS1 and KS2. English KS1 through to GCSE. For more information message 'Tutoring with Penny' on Facebook or email penny_foulkes@hotmail.co.uk

GAMES & COMPETITIONS

SHIRLEY & WYTHALL CHESS CLUB meets at Wythall Community Association in Silver Street, Wythall, B47 6LZ, every Thurs from 7.30pm. The club has four teams playing in competitive leagues. Friendly atmosphere. New players are most welcome, just turn up or contact Barry Knee on 01564 826250

SPADESBOURNE Bridge Club plays at Amphlett Hall, Crown Close, Bromsgrove B61 8DW. Join the group for friendly bridge in a pleasant venue on Thurs evenings, 7pm for a 7.15 start. Table money for visitors is £3. Details from Jan on 01905 772256.

MONDAY Bridge Club at Barnt Green Friends Meeting House would like to welcome a few new members – for more info contact the organiser, Des Clarke, on 0121 453 3034.

FRIDAY Bridge Club meets at Burcot Village Hall every Friday evening. We play friendly, competitive Bridge in comfortable surrounds. We meet at 18:45 for a prompt start at 19:00. Refreshments are provided free of charge. For full details please contact the Secretary Ed Payne on 07950951122 or visit www.bridgewebs.com/friday

BROMSGROVE Bridge Club plays every Tuesday evening from 7.25 to 10.30pm at The Court Leet (a Hungry Horse Pub) 174 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove, B61 7AY. We are very friendly and welcome guests or potential new members, with or without a partner. The club is affiliated to the English Bridge Union and the Worcestershire Contract Bridge Association. Contact the Secretary, Sally Flood, on 01527 832468 or sallyflood@gmail.com

BROMSGROVE Board Gamers is a friendly group which meets at 7.30pm each Weds at the Ladybird Inn, Aston Fields. More info on Facebook 'Bromsgrove Board Gamers'.

BARNT Green Duplicate Bridge Club meets at St Andrew's Church Hall each Weds afternoon and would like new members – contact Liz on 07538 092296.

ART, CRAFT & LITERATURE

THE WITHYBED POETS are local people who write poetry and share it with each other. You don't have to live in Withybed Green, though most of their meetings are there. They meet regularly every six weeks or so. They like to read to local audiences and some of them write "poetry on request" as they did in the Picnic in the Park. For more information and the date of next meeting, contact mail@marygreen.plus.com.

PAINTING & DRAWING If you enjoy painting and drawing, try this friendly community group which meets in the Rubery Leisure Centre, Holywell Lane, on Monday mornings, 9am-1pm, catering for all ages and abilities. The facilities are excellent for both indoor and outdoor working depending on personal preference and weather conditions. Tea and coffee is provided. Places are available. For further information telephone: 0121 453 7716 (Fridays).

COMMON THREAD: Bring your knitting, crochet, patchwork, sewing etc. All are welcome. Friendly help and chat. Meets on the last Saturday of each month (apart from Christmas Day, of course!) in The Wheel at St. Catherine's, Blackwell B60 1BN.
Please bring your own drink to stay covid safe. Further information from Angela Bevan 0121 477 9924.

THE "CRAFTY LADIES" craft group meets every Monday morning in Alvechurch Library from 10am–1pm, with knitting, crocheting, sewing, quilting etc. More info on 01905 822722.

BURCOT WOODTURNING CLUB offers a friendly meeting place for woodturners of all abilities and experience. A varied programme includes demos, talks, hands-on practical evenings and visits to exhibitions. The group meets on the first Thurs each month, 7.15–9.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Visit www.burcotwoodturners.org.uk

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY is available to host day and short courses such as card-making or scrapbooking. If you have a skill to teach or share and would like to rent a space, call the Hub on 01905 822722 and ask for Alvechurch Library.

AVONCROFT ARTS SOCIETY at Avoncroft Arts Centre (Redditch Road, Bromsgrove B60 4JR), runs tutored/ non-tutored classes in Art, Textiles, Ceramics, Embroidery and Dance. Contact AAS on 01527 833829 or avoncroft-arts@btconnect.com

ALVECHURCH ART GROUP meets at the Baptist Hall (rear of church) every Tues from 1–3.30pm, using all mediums except oil. All welcome, especially beginners. Friendly tuition. Call Paul on 0121 445 5437 or drop in.

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY Readers Group meets in the library on the last Tues of the month from 2pm–3.30pm. New members always welcome. And don't forget that you can access online audio and e-books 24/7, free of charge, by downloading the Borrowbox app. Visit www.worcestershire.gov.uk/libraries

AMY GREAVES SCHOOL OF DANCE & FITNESS

The dance school offers a variety of classes including ballet, tap, jazz, freestyle, street and cheer and acro. Classes are available for toddlers up to adults, and are based in Hopwood, Bournville and Longbridge.
Find out more at: www.amygreavesschoolofdance.com
Or contact Amy on: 07979408997 or amygreaves1@hotmail.co.uk

LICKEY HILLS ART SOCIETY, a friendly bunch of artists and those interested in art, meet at Longbridge Methodist Church, Bristol Road, B45 9TY, on the first Sat each month at 7.30pm. Open to artists and non-artists alike. For more info email Lyn lyndasharp2010@yahoo.com or come along – the members would love to see you.

SEW TOGETHER meets on Tuesday mornings from 9.30am to 12.30pm during term time at the new Cofton Village hall. They meet weekly to sew and socialise. All abilities are welcome and there are a variety of sewing machines to borrow if required. For more information contact Avril on sewtogether64@gmail.com or see Sew Together Cofton Hackett on Facebook.

BARNT GREEN ART CLUB meets at Barnt Green Scout and Guide HQ in Blackwell Road, Barnt Green. Tuesday morning and Tuesday afternoon sessions. Workshops with visiting tutors during each term. There is a waiting list, but enquiries from improvers and intermediate artists welcomed. Jackie: 0121 445 4745.

MARLBROOK QUILTERS meet on the 1st Wednesday of the month at Avoncroft Arts Centre, Redditch Road, Stoke Heath, Bromsgrove B60 4JR. They are a small friendly group who would like to welcome new members. For more information contact Maggie Forknell 07973 313034 or Sheila Nunnerley 0121 445 2238.

THE SEASONS ART CLASS is an art course where you can discover your inner artist. Perfect for absolute beginners to improvers. Classes held at Rowney Green Village Hall, Bournheath Village Hall & Ullenhall Village Hall. Get in touch to find out more by emailing seasonsartredditch@outlook.com.

KINGS NORTON PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY meet at The Tennis Club, Grange Hill Road, Birmingham B38 8RE. Season starts 18/10/23 at 8.00pm. For information contact Dave Wall Tel: 0121 458 2562, email: dave.walluk@virgin.net

GARDENS & FLOWERS

BLACKWELL COMMUNITY GARDEN in the grounds of St Catherine, Blackwell. Pop along to help water, plant and harvest. Info on 0121 445 1425.

ROWNEY GREEN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY usually meet at The Village Hall on the second Thursday each month at 7.15pm. They will not be holding their usual monthly meeting at The Village Hall on the second Thursday in July but would like to remind everyone that the Main Show will be taking place on Saturday, 2nd September 2023. You will find the Schedule for the Show available on their website www.rowneygreenhorticultural.co.uk, so please take a look and decide how many entries you would like to make. Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact Lindsay Smith on 01527 592874.

DODFORD GARDENING CLUB meets on the 2nd Monday each month (except August) usually in Dodford Village Hall at 7.45pm. New members and visitors welcome. More info at www.dodfordgardeningclub.co.uk or call Penny on 07706 153618.

ROWNEY GREEN FLOWER CLUB, meets on the fourth Thursday of the month except in December when it is the first Thursday. The flower club is having a break in July and August, with the next meeting being on September 28th with Carole. Carole is from Pinks - the florist at Becketts farm. They have had Carole demonstrate for the group before, and she never fails to delight. The cost for visitors is £5, with refreshments included. There will be a coffee morning on Monday 28th August at Rowney Green Hall, 1030-1200.

BROMSGROVE FLOWER CLUB holds regular monthly meetings on the 3rd Thursday of each month. Meets at 2pm, at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove B601AF. A yearly membership is available or come as a visitor & dip in & out. Refreshments & then a demonstration of flower arrangements and a raffle and you may be lucky and take one home. Further information on 0121 445 1915.

SOLIHULL & District Orchid Society meets on the 1st Sat each month at St George & St Teresa's Parish Centre, Station Road, Dorridge B39 8EZ. New members and visitors welcome. For more information or advice you can call Monica Johnson on 01926 747822 or email at kenneth.johnson99@ntlworld.com. You can also visit www.solihullorchidsociety.co.uk to see more.

HELP & ADVICE

POPPIES' is a monthly bereavement support group — contact Rev Sheri Gidney on 0121 445 1185 for details.

DIVORCED/separated and having trouble seeing your children? Being excluded from

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WANT YOUR EVENT IN *THE VILLAGE*?

If you have an event, or an idea that you would like to see us feature in *The Village*, please email the details to info@villageonline.co.uk. We would love to hear about your community news and events, so please let us know.

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their lives? The ASSOCIATION FOR SHARED PARENTING has been helping mums and dads in the family court system and problems over contact and residence for over 20 years. Visit www.associationforsharedparenting.org.uk

REPAIR CAFE is for those looking to save their money and fix broken or faulty household items. The Repair Cafe is part of an international network that keeps faulty appliances and clothes out of landfill and offers 'a cuppa' and a slice of cake to visitors while they wait. Visit the Repair Shop on the first Saturday of every month 2-5pm at All Saints Hall, Burcot Lane, B60 1AD.
For more info: 07804251731 or repaircafebromsgrove@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY hosts one-to-one Computer Sessions for people wanting to learn the basics. If you need help with emails or advice on surfing online then pop in to arrange for free tuition, provided by volunteers. They can also help with online applications for Blue Badges and bus passes. For more info call The Hub on 01905 822722 and ask for Alvechurch Library.

GUIDE DOGS are looking for volunteers who could give a few hours of their time to help someone locally and living with sight loss, get out and about. Volunteer sighted guides support the person they are partnered with to feel part of the community. No previous experience is necessary and full training will be provided and the role is extremely flexible! More information email MidlandsMSG@guidedogs.org.uk or visit www.guidedogs.org.uk

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

FINSTALL CROSS WI meets at Finstall Village Hall on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm. For more info see www.finstallcrosswi.wordpress.com or email finstallcrosswi@gmail.com

BEOLEY WI meets on the first Tuesday of each month in Beoley Village Hall at 7.00pm. More info from Joan Lovett on 01527 584047 or email beoleysec@wfedwi.org.uk

BENTLEY PAUNCEFOOT WI meets at 7.30pm on the second Tues every month at Bentley Village Hall (B97 5TB). More information from Helen Spence on 01527 822611 or email bentleypauncefootsec@wfedwi.org.uk

BARNT GREEN WI meets at the Baptist Church at 7.30pm on the 3rd Thursday of the month. For more information: Jenny Jellie 07983 865372.

BROMSGROVE BELLES WI meets on the second Monday each month at the Meeting Room at St Godwald's Church at 7.30pm. For more info, contact President Helen Holbeche at helenholbeche@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH WI meets on the second Monday each month in Alvechurch Village Hall, at 7.30pm. For more information email Mariea Clarke clarke.mariea@gmail.com or alvechurchpres@wfedwi.org.uk

LICKEY WI usually meets on the first Tues every month at 7.30pm in the Parish Hall (Trinity Centre), Old Birmingham Road, Lickey. More info from Jenny Ryder on 0121 445 1872, Lickeywi@gmail.com or www.lickeywi.wordpress.com

HILLSIDE AT ALVECHURCH WI meets at 7.45pm on the first Weds each month at The Ark, Alvechurch. For more info call Pat McDonagh on 0121 628 4121.

BLACKWELL & BURCOT WI meets at Burcot Village Hall on the second Weds each month, at 2pm. For info call President Mrs Barbara Knight on 0121 445 3456.

HOPWOOD WI meets at Hopwood Village Hall on the first Thurs of the month at 7.30pm. For more information call Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668.

ST CATHERINE'S BLACKWELL WI meets on the 3rd Wednesday each month at 7.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Contact Sue Barrett for more information on 01527 596092 or susanbarratt222@gmail.com

RUBERY WI meets on the 2nd Weds of the month at 7.30pm at Beacon Church Centre, Whetty Lane, when there are speakers, activities and competitions. The 4th Weds of each month is the craft evening. Non-members are welcome. Anyone can just drop in on either night. Contact Judie1055@yahoo.co.uk 07810765314.

FAIRFIELD WI meet at Fairfield village hall on the second Wednesday of the month at 7pm. For further details contact Carol Hine at fairfieldwi1932@gmail.com

VILLAGE VENUES FOR HIRE

HOPWOOD VILLAGE HALL is available for hire for parties, groups and gatherings. Please contact Booking Secretary Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668 or visit www.hopwoodvillagehall.co.uk

TARDEBIGGE COMMUNITY HALL for hire: large, bright facility for functions, clubs, societies and all activities. To book call 07763 446902 or email tchbookings@gmail.com

THE WHEEL COMMUNITY ROOM IN BLACKWELL has daytime, evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire —more info on 0121 445 1425.

THE TRINITY CENTRE IN LICKEY has evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire – more info on 0121 445 1425.

BARNT GREEN PARISH CENTRE has large and medium sized lounges available for regular hire for some morning and early afternoon sessions each week. Please contact the Parish Administrator on 0121 447 7097.

THE ARK AT ST LAURENCE has a large hall and kitchen, and smaller upper room for hire, for one-off and regular hires. More information and bookings please contact Lynda on 0121 447 7955 or email admin@thearkalvechurch.co.uk

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE HALL is available for hire to groups, clubs, societies, and private parties. The large bright hall has a stage, PA system, kitchen and bar area. There is also a smaller conference room available for hire. Enquiries to the Hall Manager Andrea Ottley on 07455892909 or hallmanager.avh@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH CRICKET CLUB PAVILION is available for hire: weekdays for community groups/clubs/societies, evening functions/private parties. Licensed bar, dance floor, kitchen area and great outdoor space. Enquiries to Stuart Brereton via 07775 714165 or ahcc.bar@gmail.com

FAIRFIELD VILLAGE HALL is available to hire for functions, groups and parties. It has a large hall with kitchen facilities. Contact the booking secretary Andrew on 07762749943 or bookings@fvh.org.uk. See website for details www.fvh.org.uk

FEATURE IN WHAT'S ON

The deadline for submissions, to feature in the What's On section of the upcoming September issue of *The Village* is 10 August 2023. Please email: info@villageonline.co.uk for more information or to feature in the listings.

Here we go again!

After Alvechurch FC's successful season last year, finishing mid table in a very competitive league, second round of the FA cup and semi-finalists in the Birmingham senior cup, it's all systems go as the club prepares for the forthcoming season, *writes Trevor Ball*.

Supporters working parties have been at the ground every Saturday throughout the summer, ensuring Lye Meadow looks its best for the opening day of the season on August 5, and groundsman Rob has worked tirelessly on the pitch in readiness for the season ahead.

Pre-season friendlies have started to be played with matches through to the Saturday before the big kick-off, and as always our management team has been reshaping our squad: as with every club, players leave and others join in the non-league player merry-go-round.

Season tickets are available – with prices reduced from last season to encourage more local support – replica shirts, scarves, hats and club pin badges are all ready to be purchased to ensure the club gets the support it needs and deserves as we set off on our next season of adventure.

Eight new clubs have joined our league this season. Local rivals AFC Telford and Leamington have been relegated to the league as well as Kettering Town, while we welcome the return of Halesowen Town, who won promotion alongside AFC Sudbury, Berkhamsted, Long Eaton Town,and Stamford.

This season looks the most competitive yet in the Southern League Central Premier Division, with the three relegated teams pushing for an immediate return to the National league, last season's play-off sides Coalville Town and Nuneaton Borough have strengthened their squads and clubs like Halesowen Town and Stourbridge with their large following, plus the local rivalries with both Redditch United and Bromsgrove Rovers, promises another exciting season ahead.

So "buckle up and enjoy the ride" as we embark on another season following the mighty Church.

■ The fixtures for 2023-24 season were to be announced on July 14, after *The Village* went to press.

High hopes: Alvechurch FC fans celebrate the team's famous victory at Cheltenham Town in the FA Cup last season. Picture/ ***Ian Macvie***

SEASON TICKETS 2023/24

With the cost of living affecting fans – and the majority of football clubs increasing their season ticket prices – Alvechurch FC have decided to REDUCE their prices

ADULTS season ticket (18+): £150 (£7.14 per league game)

SENIOR CONCESSION (65+): £120 (£5.71 per league game)

JUNIOR CONCESSION (13-17): £80 (£3.81 per league game) season tickets or students with a valid ID card

■ Season tickets are not valid for cup games, (FA Cup,FA Trophy and County Cups)

JACK'S BACK

JACK HALLAHAN is back in the side after a horrific facial injury last season. He was missed in midfield and fans are looking forward to seeing him in Alvechurch colours.

Among other returners and new faces are: *Jaanai Gordon,* an experienced centre forward who started his career at Peterborough United before joining West Ham on loan; *Ammar Dyer*, a pacy full back spent last season at Bromsgrove Rovers; *Dale Eve*, Bermudan international goalkeeper signed from Hereford; *Nathan Kelly*, who won promotion with Halesowen Town last season; *Chris Clements*, a very experienced midfielder, who played in more than 100 games in the football league; *Ethan Patterson,* returning to Lye Meadow after spells at Worcester Raiders and Hednesford Town; young defender *Ethan Hanson,* from Stourport Swifts and midfielder *Demilade Akinwae*, signed from Bromsgrove Rovers.

CLARK'S BW-SIPP

'60 YEARS OF ENTERPRISE'

BROTHERS DOUGLAS & MALCOLM CLARK

WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY

TO THANK ALL THEIR CUSTOMERS, STAFF,

WORK COLLEAGUES, FRIENDS AND CONTACTS

FOR THEIR SUPPORT OVER THE YEARS

Illustration by Mike Hatcher